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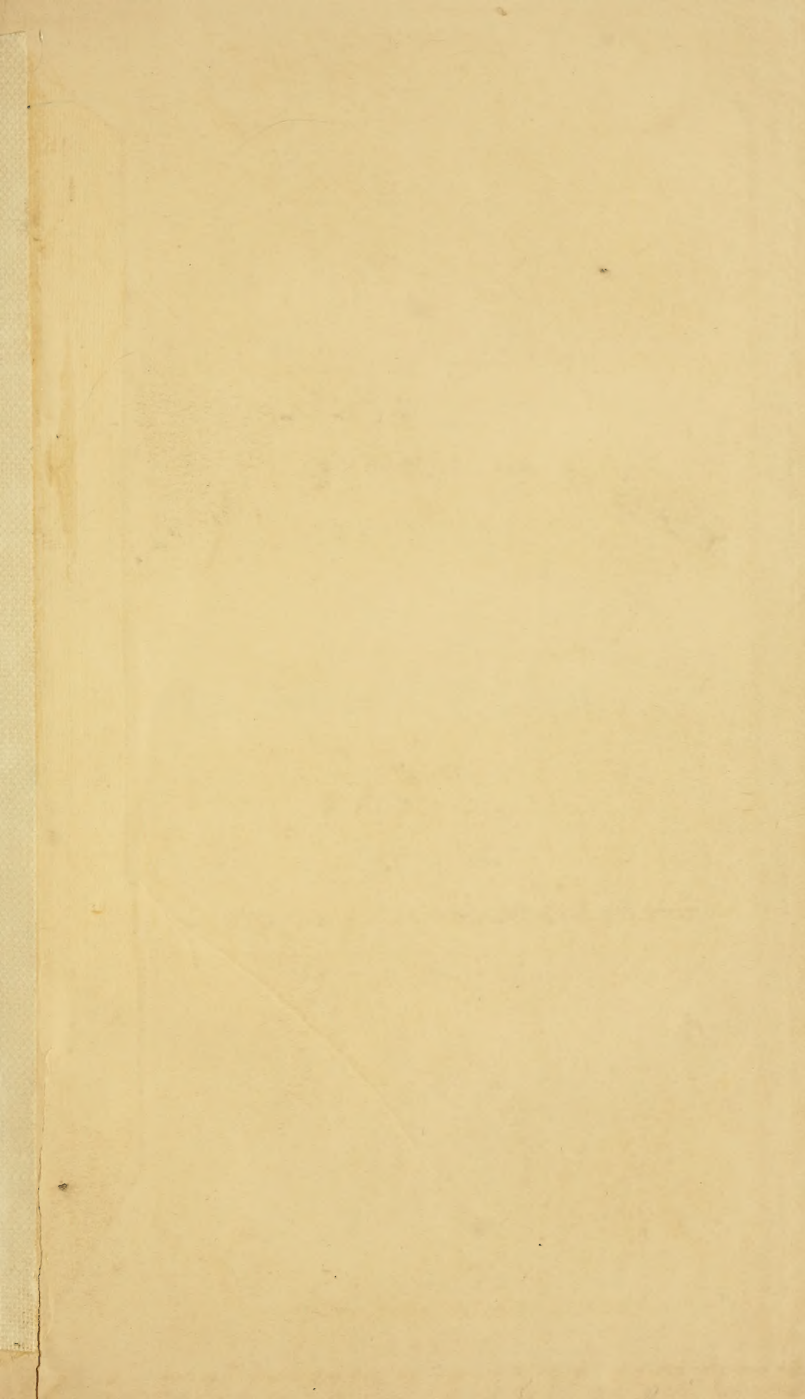
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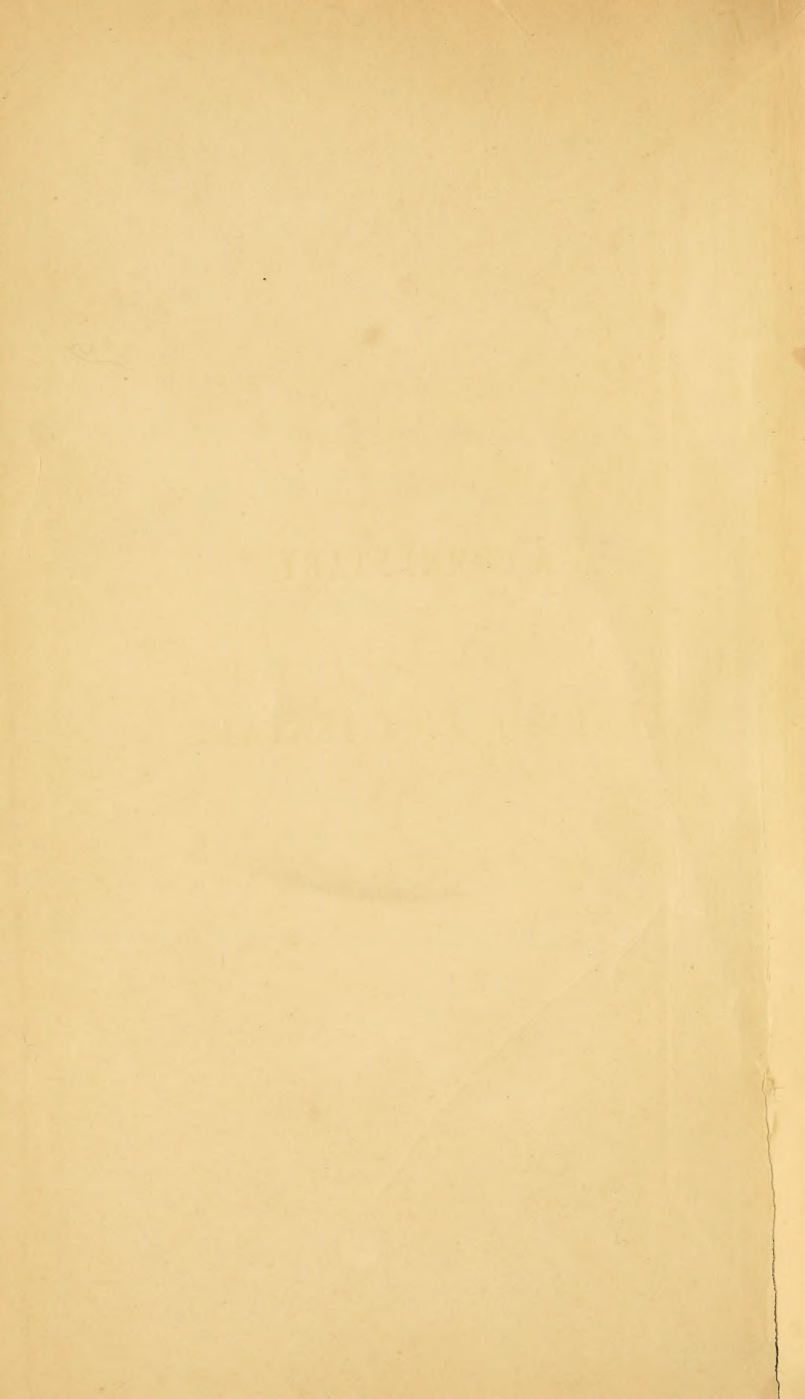
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A COMMENTARY  
ON  
THE BOOK OF ISAIAH.





# ISAIAH AS IT IS:

OR

## JUDAH AND JERUSALEM THE SUBJECTS OF ISAIAH'S PROPHESYING.

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## PRELIMINARY ESSAY.

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### SCRIPTURAL DIRECTIONS FOR UNDERSTANDING THE PROPHECIES.

VARIOUS rules have been laid down by different writers for the exposition of prophecy, which have severally prefaced divers systems of *interpretation*. But the Word of God of itself is perfect. And the Spirit of truth keeps not silence in it concerning either the end for which prophecies occupy so large a portion of the volume of inspiration, or the manner in which they are to be heard and understood, whether the predicted events be plainly written, or figuratively revealed.

So soon as things future are recorded collectively in the Holy Scriptures, principles are enforced and rules prescribed for rightly understanding and truly believing them. The Lord is judge how his own word ought to be received and dealt with by man. The Omniscient is also the Omnipotent. While the prediction of future events illustrates his sovereignty, by the accomplishment of each—as finally and universally it shall be manifest by the fulfilment of them all—that sovereignty has to be held supreme as to every truth He has revealed, and every rule He has prescribed, concerning his own word as He *spoke by the prophets*.

No truth can seemingly be more unquestionable ; yet none, it may be feared, has been more disregarded. The Jewish nation of old had chiefly this advantage over all other kindreds

on earth, that *unto them were committed the oracles of God*. Yet unto the Jews, who gloried that Moses and the prophets were their own, the Lord Jesus Christ, the true and faithful witness, said, "Do not think that I accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me. *But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?*" This *example of unbelief* on the part of a nation of zealous professors, ought not to fall from the lips of Jesus as a bootless warning to those who name his name: it cannot be such to those who believe his words and let his *sayings sink down into their ears*.

In the *writings of Moses*, to which the Lord thus appealed, these words are affixed to the most numerous prophecies he recorded, many of which are literally true at the present day; and prefixed to others, of which all nations shall be the witnesses, and more than the witnesses, in the appointed time,—*The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law*, Deut. xxix. 29.

In the writings of Moses may be learned the first lessons which, by that inspired and faithful servant, God has given to man concerning his own *sure word of prophecy*.

### I. *The secret things belong unto the Lord our God:*

Well would it have been had these words been written on the hearts of commentators and writers on prophecy, and of all students of it, as they so prominently are written in regard to it in the *book of the Lord*: and well would it be now. But not in these words only, positive and plain as is the truth they tell, were the oracles of God thus sacredly fenced about even at that early era, as the writings of Moses, by a living example, farther show. Balaam, though not of Israel, was called to be a prophet of the Lord from among the heathen. He heard the words of the Lord, and saw the vision of the Almighty. When commanded to curse Israel, he advertised the king of Moab, ere the tribes of Israel had entered Canaan, what that people shall do to his people *in the latter days*: and in vision after vision he



saw things that else are yet unseen, save in the light of many prophecies. Constrained to bless a people whom the Lord had blessed, and against whom, as he testified, *there is no divination*, he left to distant ages a lesson for other men, by thus responding to the proffers and remonstrances of his king, "*If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more.*"<sup>1</sup> Restrained as he was by the power which that word held over him, neither the temptation of great honour, nor the wrath of the king, could, in this thing, shake the courageous faithfulness of Balaam; and promises and threatenings he thus answered anew, "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord, to do either good or bad of *mine own mind*; but *what the Lord saith that will I speak.*"<sup>2</sup> In this he was faithful. And in lifting up their hands to the holy oracles of the living God, it surely behoves all over whom that word has power, to feel that this Scripture is profitable for instruction, so that, knowing that *secret things belong unto the Lord their God*, they, too, *cannot go beyond the word of the Lord their God*, to do less or more, or to do either good or bad of their *own mind*, or add to or alter the word which the Lord hath spoken; lest as to this thing Balaam should condemn them. The prophecies which he uttered, and which have respect to times yet future, were not more sacredly guarded from the first, than is the sure word of prophecy to the last, as all but the very last testimony of Scripture thus begins—"For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall *add unto these things*, God will add unto him the plagues that are written in this book." All other condemnation would be light, and all arguments vain, against adding to the words of prophecy, and, on the part of *any man*, going beyond the word of the Lord, by speaking out of his *own mind*, or setting up things that are *secret* as if they were revealed.

*We know in part, and we prophesy in part*, said an inspired apostle who had converse with Christ in his glory. Beyond that *part* no man can go. Prophecy has its limits, that cannot

<sup>1</sup> Num. xxii. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Num. xxiv. 13.

be passed over. As there are things revealed that are imparted unto man, and were given by inspiration ; so there are things secret, which the Father hath in his power, as to Him they belong. *My thoughts are not as your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so far are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.* Except only as the Spirit of the Lord hath brought them down, and set them in the Scriptures, man by his own wisdom, else of the earth earthy, can no more reach to the immeasurable and incomprehensible elevation of His thoughts, than he could walk among the stars of the firmament of heaven, or lift up his hand to take any of them down. Both are alike infinitely beyond the reach of his knowledge and the limits of his power. *For who hath stood in the counsel of the Lord, and hath perceived and heard his word?* Secret things belong unto the Lord our God. In the spirit of such a faith, and in the knowledge of such a truth—which, undeniable though it be, is not always thus felt—the sweet psalmist of Israel, with whom and with whose house the Lord hath made a covenant for ever, could, from his own experience, thus appeal unto the Lord : *Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty : neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother : my soul is even as a weaned child. Let Israel hope in the Lord, from henceforth and for ever,* Ps. cxxxi.

Another spirit has sometimes been evoked, especially when times such as are passing now, turn the minds of many to prophetic themes ; as they may have also begun to infuse into the minds of worldly men their predicted *fear of the things that are coming on the earth*. Questions may be asked, and attempts be made to resolve them, touching things that are not revealed. Hence arises the greater need of watching unremittingly, lest as to any such the soul should be lifted up, and the mind be exercised in things too high for man. Security here lies in the prostration of imagination by cleaving incessantly to the truth, which is thus first welded in Scripture to the sure word of prophecy, that *secret things belong unto the Lord our God*. This

fact, when fixed in the retentive mind, will supply a ready answer to every such query, stifle such thoughts ere they take the form of words, and suppress such inquiries till *things revealed* be first known and distinguished, to be for ever set apart from secret things which are not man's but the Lord's. To attempt to pass *beyond* this line of demarcation, which Scripture alone can determine, were, as the mere effect of such an act, to plunge into an unfathomable abyss of error. For no man, *going beyond* the restricted bounds, and trenching on the province and property of the Lord, can ever find a place in all the "dark unknown," and the reserved unrevealed, whereon to set his foot.—Much speculation, as unwise as unwarrantable, would be viewed as it ought, were the utmost bounds of inquiry to be restricted to those of prophecy, never to surpass them. There is a word here for the imaginations of men, as for the waves of the sea, however restless, and high, and noisy either may be, *Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.* Farther men of faith will not seek to go. What they know not now they shall know hereafter. He who said, *We know in part, and we prophesy in part,* added, *But when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away.*—*For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.* Thus Paul, by the same spirit, responded to Isaiah,—*they shall see eye to eye,* when the Lord shall bring again Zion.—The Lord hath made bare his holy arm *in the eyes of all nations*; and all the ends of the earth *shall see the salvation of our God.*

To maintain that, as *it is written*, the *secret things belong unto the Lord our God*, and that no man can safely go *beyond the word of the Lord*, or add anything to the sure word of prophecy, is theoretically no higher principle than Balaam realized; and practically no higher wisdom than truly to know that God is wiser than man, and that He who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, knows best what to keep secret, and what to reveal.

The application of this principle is an exercise of faith. How can God unveil the future? is a question for an atheist. *How*

he *will* execute his purposes, and fulfil his word, is a thing too high for man—if a secret thing that belongs unto the Lord. *How* the promise, of which Isaac was the heir, could be fulfilled, and the command to offer him for a burnt-offering be obeyed, Abraham asked not. The one was a *thing revealed* by the Almighty; the other a command He, too, had given. The father of the faithful, else such he would have never been, knew that there are no impossibilities with Him; he believed that the word would be fulfilled though Isaac were consumed, *accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead.* *I am the Almighty God*, was a testimony which Abraham believed. Nothing is impossible but that His word should not stand, or His purposes fail. There can be no impediment in the way of its accomplishment, whatever *secret things* He may retain unto himself. Be what it may, *the Lord is strong to execute his word*; though he give not an account of the manner unto man.

To this truth—that secret things belong unto the Lord our God—another is affixed, which not only marks the distinction between things that differ, but shows that things revealed are man's, while things secret, or unrevealed, are the Lord's.

II. *But these things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever.*

*Think not*, said Christ, *that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets.*<sup>1</sup> *Search the Scriptures*<sup>2</sup> was a command of his ere those of the New Testament were written. *Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning; that we through faith and patience of the Scriptures might have hope.*<sup>3</sup> Now, therefore, saith the Apostle Paul, addressing the faithful in Christ Jesus, *ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.*<sup>4</sup> We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, &c.<sup>5</sup> The last book of the Holy Scriptures thus begins, “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to *shew unto his*

<sup>1</sup> Mat. v. 18.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. xv. 4.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Peter i. 19.

<sup>2</sup> John v. 39.

<sup>4</sup> Eph. ii. 19.



*servants* things which must shortly come to pass. . . . Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and *keep those things which are written therein.*"—True it is that secret things belong unto the Lord our God. But it is also *written, The things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever.*

Each of these truths has a fallacy opposed to it—that secret things are man's, or that things revealed are not.

So prone is man to danger as to error, that Scylla and Charybdis have long been a proverb in the world, the fear of the one bringing destruction from the other. On one side is a rock, on the other a whirlpool. The line of safety lies between them; and dangers on either hand have alike to be avoided.

While many forget that secret things belong unto the Lord, not fewer, it may be feared, disregard the other truth with which this is associated in Scripture; and, instead of believing that the things which are revealed belong to them and to their children for ever, are rather prone to justify themselves, as recumbent on their opposite philosophy they are *at ease in Zion*. Things secret, and kept secure in God's own counsel, are much the same to them as things revealed in the sure word of prophecy, if these cannot yet be looked at, as objects of sight, with the bodily eye. Rightly secure against prying into things too high for man, in not vainly and presumptuously intermeddling with them, they wrest this Scripture concerning *secret things* into the virtual denial of that which the God of truth has placed beside it in his word. It is not for them to solve the supposed *hidden* mysteries in which unfulfilled prophecies are involved! In the spirit of Gallio they care for none of these things, as not belonging to them; and it is wiser, they deem, to let prophecies alone till the time of their accomplishment, when they may find a place among articles of faith. *Then* these may be urged as arguments against unbelievers; but they doubt not the inspiration of Scripture, and have no need of them.

The belief, held as unquestioned, that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and that holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, might open the ear to the things they reveal, ere they be sounded as facts in the hearing

of the infidel. That, indeed, is such an use of prophecy, that if they believe not *Moses and the prophets*, neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead. That use of it will cease, when many things now written shall be seen. *They shall know that I am the Lord. The Lord will make bare his holy arm in the sight of all nations.* The time cometh when every eye shall see him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even ungodly sinners shall be convinced of all their ungodly deeds, and all their hard speeches against him; and their faith shall be that of the devils that believe and tremble. But it was not to the heathens that things revealed were thus written; nor to the enemies of Christ that things which must come to pass are *shown*. They belong to others, who know them sooner, and believe them ere they come. And it is not for the servants of Christ, who is the Lord of the holy prophets, to defer to give heed to the things that are revealed, till they be the objects not of faith but of sight, not merely of what *the Lord hath spoken*, but also of what He then shall have *done* upon the earth, and the senses of the enemies of the Lord and of his word shall forbid their neglect or denial any more. His pleading, as, according to Isaiah and many other prophets, He shall plead with all flesh; the resurrection of the just and of the unjust; the day of judgment; the blessedness of the righteous, and the perdition of the wicked; the kingdom for the coming of which believers pray; and the new heavens and the new earth, for which they look according to *his promise*—as well as those things which, as written, shall first come to pass—all rank as prophecies among things that are revealed; and on the principle of waiting for the fulfilment of predictions till they become articles of faith, could scarcely find a place in such a rationalistic creed—if any creed there thus could be of things unseen as yet. If God hath spoken, man may hear. *The word of the Lord* which came unto the prophets has to be received and believed as His from whom it came. They spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Men may read it as they list, or neglect it as they may, but whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, the word standeth sure; and the things which are revealed belong to

those to whom they are given, as things that are secret belong unto the Lord.

All the riches of the king of Moab could not tempt Balaam to go beyond the word of the Lord, to say *less* or more. More pertains not unto man; less the Lord has not imparted. In harmony with the first testimonies concerning prophecy in the *writings of Moses*, the same Spirit imparts this last warning, as the sacred canon closes, “*If any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy*, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”

It is a scriptural rule concerning prophecy, enforced by such solemn threatenings, that nothing be *taken away* from it, as that nothing be added: and in order to understand the prophecies, this rule has also to be regarded. It is folly, not wisdom—as it is danger and not safety—to disbelieve any part of the testimony. These words are the Lord’s—*O fools, and slow of heart to believe ALL that the prophets have spoken*. The prophetic warning, with an apostolic admonition superadded, is transferred from the Old Testament to the New, *Beware, therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; Behold ye despisers, and wonder and perish: for I work a work in your day which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you*. No part of the Divine testimony has to be rejected, even though it reveal a work so *marvellous* as to surpass their credibility when it shall be related as an accomplished fact. —*The Lord shall rise up—that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act*. Now, therefore, be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong: for I have heard from the Lord God of hosts a consumption, even determined upon the whole earth. That which Isaiah and the other prophets heard from the Lord God of hosts is to be believed because it is written, although it be a work so *strange* as to be incredible by mockers till it must be believed. It was not Moses, nor any of the prophets or apostles, but the Lord of them all, who, in connexion with the speedy avenging of his *own elect*, asked the question, *When the Son of man cometh shall he find faith on the earth?* There are many prophecies which have not yet

passed into actual realities. Of these, as they come to pass, the world and the men of it will be incredulous, as works wrought by the Lord according to the Scriptures, till that incredulity shall cease in vain. *They will not see, but they shall see.* Whether men act on the faith of it or not, it is nevertheless and not the less true, that the things which are revealed are *written* in the book of the Lord that they may be heard, and imparted that they may be received, and not that they may be neglected and disowned. However they may either be disregarded or perverted, they shall *surely come*; and whatever silence may be kept concerning them, so that men would not speak, or bear to hear, of them,—in the *appointed time* they shall *speak and not lie*. That which is written in the prophets has to be believed by those who know that the things that are revealed belong to them, before it be beheld, not in faith but in fact, by the despisers who shall wonder and perish when these words of the prophets shall *come on them*. *He who heard the words of the Lord, and knew the knowledge of the Almighty*, said, in reference, too, to the promised blessedness of Israel, *God is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent; hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?* Hath he spoken, and shall not men give heed to his word?

According to one of these principles—that *secret things belong unto the Lord our God*—nothing has to be held as a predicted truth or matter of faith, but those things only which are revealed: and according to the other—that *the things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever*—nothing that is revealed has to be counted, or to be treated, as if it did not thus belong to man.

III. The end for which things else secret are revealed, and to which all prophecy is adapted, is also made known, together with these truths. “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, *that we may do all the words of this law.*”

In speaking of the *latter days* when He shall *perform the*



*thoughts of his heart, and men shall consider it perfectly, the word of the Lord concerning the false prophets, by whom He had not spoken, is, But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil ways, and from the evil of their doings.—* The reason, as Jesus told his disciples who asked him, why he spake unto the people in parables, was, “because they seeing, see not; and hearing, they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing, ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing, ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them!”<sup>1</sup> Of Timothy it is recorded, *from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures (of the Old Testament), which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.* And it is immediately added—*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.* That the man of God may be thus thoroughly furnished, all Scripture is given by inspiration of God. The word of God is the sword of the Spirit. The whole armour of God has to be put on, as it is given, for the good fight of faith. It is by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, that the witnesses of Jesus overcome the accuser of the brethren, and the adversary of their souls. The Holy Scriptures are all the word of a thrice holy God. The doctrine is according to godliness. It is to wholesome words that believers are called to consent. Repelling the false accusations of the unbelieving Jews, Paul, in pleading before Felix till his judge trembled, said, “This I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets; and have hope towards God—that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. And

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xiii. 13-17.

*herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men."*

There is a moral or spiritual connexion between the knowledge of the truth and the practice of righteousness; as, on the other hand, there is a like congruous union between the *belief of a lie*, and *pleasure in unrighteousness*. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and He will show them his covenant. But to the unbelieving Jews Jesus said, "*Search the Scriptures.... But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?*" However plain the testimony of Moses and the prophets was concerning the Messiah, their eyes and their ears were closed, and their hearts hardened against it; the same *evil heart of unbelief* hindered them from believing the writings of Moses and the words of the Messiah. They believed not Jesus because He told them the truth. Others came in their own name whom they did believe. He who knew what was in man assigned the moral cause at once of such obstinate incredulity and such blind belief. They sought not the honour that cometh from God only. And in their self-deceivings they garnished the sepulchres of the prophets, while they possessed the spirit of their fathers who slew them.—*Cursed are ye*, said Christ, *when all men shall speak well of you, for so did your fathers of the false prophets.* But He also said, *If any man will do the Father's will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.*<sup>1</sup> If things that are revealed are to be understood, moral obstructions to the belief of them have first to be removed; and the end for which they are revealed to us and to our children has to be remembered, *viz., that we may do all the words of this law.* It is through *sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth*,<sup>2</sup> that the faithful in Jesus are *chosen to salvation*.

IV. But, farther, the Holy Scriptures abound with express testimonies and illustrations of the way, the only way, in which

<sup>1</sup> John vii. 17.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Thess. xi. 13.

the knowledge of things revealed can be attained, viz., by giving heed to the *sure word of prophecy*, and believing it as it is written.

*Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.—To the law and to the testimony: IF THEY SPEAK NOT ACCORDING TO THIS WORD, IT IS BECAUSE THERE IS NO LIGHT (Heb. no morning or dawning) IN THEM.*<sup>1</sup> The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand.—For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?<sup>2</sup> *Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth.*<sup>3</sup> *I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things which are not yet done*, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.—Yea, I have spoken it, and I will bring it to pass: I have purposed it, I will also do it.<sup>4</sup>—There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless, the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand.<sup>5</sup> There is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord.<sup>6</sup>—I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me, and what I shall answer (marg.) when I am argued with. And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith.<sup>7</sup>—The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.—The judgments of the Lord are true (truth), and righteousness altogether.<sup>8</sup>—The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: He maketh the devices of the people of none effect. The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.<sup>9</sup> Thy testimonies are very sure.<sup>10</sup> Thy testimonies are my delight and my counsellors.—I have chosen the way of truth; thy

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah viii. 16, 20.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah xiv. 24, 27.

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah xxv. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Isaiah xli. 9-11.

<sup>5</sup> Prov. xix. 21.

<sup>6</sup> Prov. xxi. 30.

<sup>7</sup> Hab. ii. 1-4.

<sup>8</sup> Ps. xix. 7, 9.

<sup>9</sup> Ps. xxxiii. 10, 11.

<sup>10</sup> Ps. xciii. 5.

judgments have I laid before me. I have stuck unto thy testimonies.—Quicken me after thy loving-kindness; so shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth. For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven. Thy faithfulness is unto all generations.—Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them. THE ENTRANCE OF THY WORDS GIVETH LIGHT: it giveth understanding unto the simple. Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever.<sup>1</sup>

In the New Testament, the authority of the prophets, as that of those who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, is uniformly held to be absolute by Christ and his apostles. *It is written*, was their appeal to unerring and absolute decrees.

“The Son of man goeth *as it is written* of him.”<sup>2</sup> Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: “for *it is written*, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.”<sup>3</sup> “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the *Scriptures* be fulfilled, that *thus it must be*?”<sup>4</sup> “For I say unto you, that this that *is written* must be accomplished in me.”<sup>5</sup> “And He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that *all things must be fulfilled* which were *written* in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me. *Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer.*”<sup>6</sup> *The Scripture cannot be broken.*<sup>7</sup> *The Scriptures must be fulfilled.*<sup>8</sup>

“We having the same spirit of faith, according as *it is written*, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak.”<sup>9</sup> “Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election have obtained it, and the rest were blinded, according as *it is written*, God hath given them a spirit of slumber; eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear. . . . I would not, brethren, that ye should

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cxix. 24-30, 31, 88-90, 129, 130, 152.

<sup>2</sup> Mat. xxvi. 24; Mark xiv. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Mat. xxvi. 31; Mark xiv. 27.

<sup>4</sup> Mat. xxvi. 53, 54.

<sup>5</sup> Luke xxii. 37.

<sup>6</sup> Luke xxiv. 44-46.

<sup>7</sup> John x. 35.

<sup>8</sup> Mark xiv. 49.

<sup>9</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 13.



be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved; as *it is written*, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.”<sup>1</sup> “We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. For *it is written*, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.”<sup>2</sup>—“Christ pleased not himself; but as *it is written*, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me. For *whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning*, that we through *faith* and *comfort* of the *Scriptures* might have hope.”<sup>3</sup>—“When this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, *then* shall be brought to pass the *saying that is written*, Death is swallowed up in victory.”<sup>4</sup>—“We have also a more *sure word of prophecy*; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, *until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts*: knowing this *first*, that *no prophecy* of Scripture is of *any private interpretation*. For the prophecy came not in old time by the *will of man*: but holy men of old spake as they were moved by the *Holy Ghost*.”<sup>5</sup>—“This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which *I stir up your pure minds* by way of remembrance; that ye may be *mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets*, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Saviour.”<sup>6</sup>—“We, *according to his promise*, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwell-eth righteousness.”<sup>7</sup>

From the *writings of Moses*, and the *testimony* of prophets and apostles, and of him who is the Lord of them all, there is thus *precept upon precept and line upon line*, touching the manner in which the sure word of prophecy has to be heard, and understood, and believed; and not the credit merely, but the implicit faith which is due to it as *it is written*.

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xi. 7, 8, 25, 26.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. xiv. 10, 11.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. xv. 3, 4.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 54.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Peter i. 19-21.

<sup>6</sup> 2 Peter iii. 1, 2.

<sup>7</sup> 2 Peter iii. 13.

It is a commandment of the Lord Jesus Christ to believers in his name to beware of *false prophets* that come in sheep's clothing. Such was the form in which false prophets came in Israel of old. *They say unto every one that walked after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you.*—They spake a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord. They prophesied lies *in his name*, and were prophets of the deceit of their own heart. *They perverted the words of the living God.* They used their tongues, and said, He saith. The Lord was against them. Of them, and of his own word, in opposition to theirs in his name, it is written, *The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream ; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat ? saith the Lord. Is not my word like a fire ? saith the Lord ; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces ?*—A dream that is told is no more like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces, than the deceit, or any imagination of man's heart, is like the word of the Lord. The question is, not what men *say* that He saith, but *what hath the Lord spoken ?* The things that are revealed are those only that are *written*, so that no man can blot them out or *alter* them.

The words of the living God are not to be *perverted*. *The Scriptures must be fulfilled : they cannot be broken ;* and ought not to be *wrested*. No imagination of man's heart is like the *thoughts* of the heart of the Lord ; nor any conceit of his like the counsel of the Lord ; even as the dream of a night is not like *His word* that abideth for ever. *Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost ;* and therefore it is that *no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation.* The vision itself *will speak and not lie.* But ere it thus come and speak, it is written plain upon tables, that he who reads may run.

*The entrance of the word giveth light.*—To the law and to the testimony, said the prophet Isaiah ; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light, literally, no morning or dawning *in them.* *It is well,* says the Apostle Peter to them that have obtained like precious faith, to give heed to the *sure word of prophecy*, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.

With that sure word light enters into them, the morning comes, the day dawns ; and by the light which the concentrated rays of that sure word imparts, as heed is given to it, the day-star arises, where, without it, the place was dark without a dawning.

Such was *not* the illuminated condition of the mind of Peter, and the other apostles and disciples of Jesus, till, after his crucifixion and resurrection from the dead, their understandings were opened to understand *the Scriptures*. For in the New Testament many things are written for our instruction as to the manner in which the sure word of prophecy has to be read and received.

Whether pertaining to prophecies fulfilled or unfulfilled, a greater mystery is not made known in them all than *the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh*. That he by whom all things were made, and to whom all power in heaven and in earth is given, shall accomplish *all that is written* of him, and bear the glory which Scripture unveils as his promised and purchased inheritance, does not exceed all that it could have entered into the heart of man to conceive, more than the mystery of his incarnation and crucifixion did, before he was manifested in the flesh and hung upon the cross. None who profess the smallest particle of *Christian* faith, though far less than the least of all seeds, can doubt the fundamental doctrine of the cross, on which rests the only hope of a sinner's salvation. The prophets testified of his sufferings, and of sufferings for his sake, as also of *the glory that shall follow*. The literality of their testimony to the decease He accomplished is such that any babe in Christ may wonder how a vail should rest upon the heart of a Jew in reading the Old Testament, so dark and thick that the light of the words of their own prophets cannot penetrate it, and show that Jesus is the very Christ. Yet antecedently to their completion, however plain and undeniable they now are, these things were as contrary to the prevailing prejudices of the Jewish nation, and as inconceivable of themselves, but for the sure word of prophecy, as any of the *marvellous things* which that word declares that the same Lord of glory will yet do upon the earth.

The *thirty pieces of silver* at which Jesus was prized, when the covenanting or bargaining ended between Judas and the chief priests and rulers, for which they *agreed* together, as acting but not believing literalists then;—the use made with the money in the purchase of the *potter's field*, of itself worthless but *for burying strangers* in;—the cry of the Jewish mob, “not this man but Barabbas,” when Jesus was offered and *rejected*;—the *rod* with which he was *smitten on the cheek*;—the *gall* given him for meat, which he would not take;—the *vinegar* in which the sponge was dipped that was raised to his parched lips as he hung on the *accursed tree*, and of which, in his *thirst*, they gave him to *drink*;—the crosses beside his own on which hung the *transgressors* with whom he was *numbered*, and *had his death*;—the nails with which his *hands* and feet were *wounded*;—the spear that *pierced him*;—the *rich man's tomb*, in which in *his death* he lay;—and all that Jews and Romans did to Jesus—were mere secular things, or acts of men, which, though now they all may well rebuke the unbelief of Christian men in the *sure word of prophecy*, were then sufficient, instead of confirming faith, to stagger that of the apostles.

Yet never were facts more literally told, or things, such as these, more minutely revealed, than those of the prophets were fulfilled as Jesus was rejected, and condemned, and crucified by the Jews. The scribes and Pharisees, proud in their own wisdom, and in the name of their own prophets too, perverting the words of the living God, and teaching for doctrines the commandments of men, disbelieved Moses and the prophets, and *cut off Messiah the Prince*. Traditions took the place of truths; and hence their blindness and iniquity. Their eye was not single, to read the testimony of the prophets as *it is written*; but their eye was evil, and, as He who knew what was in man told what was in them, *the whole body was full of darkness*. Because the light that was in them was darkness, and that vail upon the heart hindered the entrance of the testimony, the word that alone gives light, the most luminous prophecies were wholly obscured, and did not *dawn* upon their darkened minds. They did not desire the knowledge of the ways of the Lord; and they did not know and would not learn them. So *great*



was *that darkness* and self-delusion, that, with the plain truth before them, they closed their eyes lest they should see, and shut their ears lest they should hear. Thus, *well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet*. In their blindness they did the very things to Jesus which they would not believe. They would not believe what was written; but they *fulfilled all that was written of him*. "*Because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath-day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him.*" To them, as Isaiah testified, he was for a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence; and as the apostles Paul and Peter bore witness to a fact still true, "*They stumbled at that stumbling-stone; as it is written, Behold I lay in Zion a stumbling-stone and rock of offence—even to them which stumble at the word being disobedient.*" They stumbled at the word; they did not know the voices of the prophets; and to the Jews the cross of Christ is a *stumblingblock* to this day. The vail is yet untaken away; and though the prophets are still read every Sabbath-day in their synagogues, they stumble at the word as ever. And not till fancies be abandoned, and facts be believed, and *they shall look upon him whom*, in all the literality of an accomplished prediction, they have *pierced*, shall they cease from the error and the evil of their own way, and turn as a people to the Lord God of their fathers.

But the same principle has a wider application. And here it may be asked, What argument has a Christian with a Jew if the other chapters of Isaiah be not read as they are *written*, as well as the 53d? or, are there no *words*, even in that prediction, at which professing believers in the prophets *stumble*? Is it believed that kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they hear; and that which they had not heard shall they consider,—as it is that he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities—and cut off out of the land of the living? Is his kingdom believed in as well as his cross? Is it true, and held as truth, as Jesus said, that *Scripture cannot be broken*; that *the Scriptures must be fulfilled*?

The disciples of Jesus, who ever followed his footsteps, heard his words and saw his miracles, were not for a time free from the prevailing blindness of their kindred. Not at the beginning

of his ministry, but towards its close, when the Lord, before his last journey to Jerusalem, told them that he must *suffer many things, and be killed, and be raised again the third day*, Peter—judging of the Messiah far otherwise than the prophets had *testified* of his first coming in the flesh, and shocked at the thought of such unseemly and unimagined humiliation of the Son of the Highest—was even bolder than his wont, and *took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee (pity thyself) Lord; this shall not be unto thee*. Addressing him, in answer to his seeming pity, by a name, and in terms never else used by him to a disciple, but only to the tempter himself, Jesus *turned and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men*. Nay, after having made solemn profession of their faith in Jesus as the very Christ, so grievous were then their misconceptions of what the prophets had shown beforehand with all the lucidness of heaven's own light, and Christ had told them should be fulfilled, that, when his predicted sufferings were seen by their own eyes, instead of beholding them as infallible proofs of his Messiahship, as they must have done had they believed the *things* that were *written*, their ignorant misconceptions led them to look on the cause of Christ as thereby for ever lost. Abandoning faith in him as the Messiah, the first tidings of his resurrection *seemed* even to the apostles as *idle tales, and they believed them not*; and on the very day of which Jesus had spoken, as that on which he should be raised from the dead, his disciples began to return to Galilee again. Two of them had scarcely departed with that intent from Jerusalem, when a fellow-traveller as he seemed—their unknown and risen Lord—questioned these hopeless and faithless men touching the matter that lay so heavy on their hearts, as they communed together in their undisguisable sadness. When told of the hopes which the death of Jesus of Nazareth had blasted, his first words to them were such as may well tingle still in other ears as then in theirs, *O fools, and slow of heart to believe ALL that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things con-*

cerning himself. When their eyes were opened, and they knew him, and he vanished out of their sight, however disconsolate before in their unbelieving communings, they said one to another, in altered accents, and more than revived hopes, “*Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked to us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?*” Their journey to Galilee was over. “And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven together, and them that were with them.” As they told these things another witness entered, at whose presence they were terrified and affrighted, notwithstanding his own salutation of peace. *Why*, he said, *are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet—that bore the wounds with which he was wounded—that it is I myself.* While they yet believed not for joy and wondered, he did eat before them. “And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might *understand the Scriptures*, and said unto them, **THUS it is written**, and **THUS** it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things.” The words which he had spoken to them before, in all plainness of speech, they did not understand. But when the wounded hands and feet of the Saviour were shown them, and when their eyes and their understandings were opened to understand the Scriptures, they saw the reality of his Messiahship in the literality of the prophecies.

They were witnesses of these things. No longer savouring the things that be of men, and not the things that be of God, and no longer the fool that like others he had been, while slow of heart to believe *all* that the prophets had spoken, the apostle Peter, not denying his Lord any more, nor quailing again at the voice of a menial, fearlessly and faithfully proclaimed on the day of Pentecost to thousands of assembled Jews, that that same Jesus whom, being delivered by the determinate counsel

and foreknowledge of God, they by wicked hands had crucified and slain, was both Lord and Christ. As in his first, so also in his second recorded sermon, he testified that *those things* which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled. But, as a believer in all that the prophets had spoken, and a witness of the resurrection of Christ, he spake of the time of the final accomplishment of all that *is written*, “And He shall send Jesus Christ—whom the heavens must receive until the times of the restitution of all things, which *God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.*” He appealed to the truth of the testimony of Moses and all the prophets; and unto the promise of God to Abraham, that in his seed all kindreds of the earth shall be blessed. The preaching of the gospel of salvation through a crucified and exalted Saviour thus began in direct appeals to prophecies, whether literally fulfilled or yet to be accomplished, by those who previously were shocked, and whose faith was shaken, at the thought of the actual reality of *things that were revealed.*

Paul, too, *as his manner was*, when he had ceased to be a spiritually proud Pharisee, and had no longer faith in the traditions of men, but in the words of the prophets, went into the synagogue of the Jews at Thessalonica, and three Sabbath-days reasoned with them *out of the Scriptures*, opening and alleging that Christ *must needs have suffered* and risen from the dead. Some of them believed, and of devout Greeks a great multitude: and thus was formed, as turned from darkness unto light, the Church of the Thessalonians. “They turned from dumb idols to serve the living God, and to *wait for his Son from heaven.*” They believed alike in prophecies fulfilled and unfulfilled. But the Jews, who believed not, and would not *search the Scriptures*, nor reason with Paul out of them, nor give heed to the express and explicit testimony of their own prophets, went to the rulers, crying, These that have turned the world upside down have come hither also. These all do contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying that there is another King, one Jesus. They would not bear to hear what *God spake by the prophets*, but, appealing to the heathen rulers of a pagan city, they urged



the false charge and groundless fear of breaking and endangering the decrees of Cæsar. Paul and Silas were sent away by night to Berea; and there they went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were *more noble* than those of Thessalonica, in that they *received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily*, whether *these things* were so. *Therefore* many of them believed.

Pleading before king Agrippa the cause of the gospel rather than his own, Paul thus testified of his ministry, "Having obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying NONE OTHER THINGS *than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come*, that Christ should suffer, and that he should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people and to the Gentiles." When vehemently denounced as beside himself, and charged with madness by Festus, in thus testifying solely of these *things* which Moses and the prophets did say should come, he said, "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and soberness. For the king knoweth these things. King Agrippa, *believest thou the prophets?* I know that thou believest." Apollos, whose name is associated with that of Paul, was an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures, and helped them much who believed through grace, for he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the *Scriptures* that Jesus was the Christ.

Then, it was to speak the words of truth and soberness—though not then only accounted madness—to speak none other things than those which Moses and the prophets did say should come.

Illustrations thus abound in the New Testament, that when men, apostles though they were, did not hold to *the testimony*, and speak *according to this word*, it was because there was no light in them; that *things* which are *revealed*, and which belong to us, are no less literally true that they are as opposite as can be to human prejudices, or any mere imagination of man's heart; that, Christ himself being witness, it is folly, not wisdom, to be slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken;—that the apostolic preaching of the gospel was uniformly accompanied by appeals to the testimony of the prophets,

as the word of the Lord; that *it is written* was not a sentiment to be discussed, but a sentence of absolute authority with believing men; that to receive the word with all readiness of mind, when nothing was spoken but what Moses and the prophets did say should come, and to search the *Scriptures* daily if *these things* were so—was *more noble* than not to search or hear them; that it was the better part, chosen by some and neglected by others, to receive the word—the word of the heavenly Father—as little children receive the word of an earthly parent, with all readiness of mind; and that apostles appealed, in like manner as true, to prophecies which were then accomplished, or have still to be fulfilled.

It is not specially of prophecies whose completion is yet past, or of those that speak of the sufferings of Christ—which Jews *interpret* still, and try to explain away, as Gentiles have dealt, and still deal with others—but to those which pertain to the *power and coming of the Lord* that the apostolic admonition applies—we have a more sure word of prophecy to which ye do well to take heed—till the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts. But it is of all alike, no prophecy omitted, that it is added, as primarily to be regarded, *knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation*. The reason is, *for it came not by the will of man*; but holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. That which came by the will of God, and is his word, is not to be mended by the wisdom of man. It is the unchangeable word of unchangeable Jehovah. Nor ought deaf ears or closed eyes to be turned to it, when heard or read as *it is written*.

Fifty times, in the book of Ezekiel alone, prophecies that tell of other things than the suffering of Jesus, but in which the “glory that shall follow” the full accomplishment of them all has its appointed place, are closed in these emphatic words, which tell that something else shall be known thereby besides the manifest accomplishment of them all, *They shall know that I am the Lord*.

The only wisdom here is that which cometh from above; and which, to those who submit exclusively to his teaching, is im-

parted by the Holy Ghost, by whom the prophets spake. When asked in faith without doubting, the Spirit of the Lord can rend every vail; and, as heed is given to it, can make a way for his own sure word of prophecy into the heart, with which light enters there, however dark it be—as it does into a dark place with the rays of the sun. As to things that are to come to pass, or to the *power and coming* of the Lord, they that speak not according to the testimony have no light in them; not even that of the faintest dawn. But, as revealed, there is a mean, though only one, by which the day dawns, and the day-star—the herald of the coming of the Sun of righteousness, at whose rising all darkness of every order shall vanish away for ever—arises in the heart, if heed be given to the sure word of prophecy *till* then.

Verisimilitude, however specious, is not truth, which it only apes. Artistical imitations of natural objects, however perfect, are not nature's handiwork, but man's. The humblest floweret which he treads under foot, and with which God has strewed the earth, mocks all his art. Let him but try to improve one of them by any alteration of his, and he only mars its beauty by the nicest touch of the finest instrument, with which he would change it into any other form than its own. The analogy holds good with God's word, as with his works. That word is perfect. *The Scriptures cannot be broken. The Scriptures must be fulfilled.—As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it.* However beautiful they may appear, and however artfully they be constructed, painted flowers are not a garden. The earth did not nourish them, nor rain from heaven cause them to grow. Imitations are not the things they represent. Whatever paints may be spread over it, the canvas is not the verdant hill and dale. So is it with the word of God, and that which men would make it. *I have stuck to thy testi-*

*monies.*—*Thy testimonies are very faithful*, said the man after God's own heart, who was as a weaned child. It is well to give heed to the *sure word of prophecy*—knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation. It has come out of the mouth of the Lord, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto He sent it. It shall surely come, and shall speak and not lie. His heart which is lifted up is not upright in him, but the just shall live by his *faith*.

Private interpretation is precluded, because the word is that of God. The right of private judgment is not taken away; for God hath given understanding, or reason, unto man. It was of the *signs of the times* that the Lord Jesus Christ said unto the *people*, Why do ye not of yourselves judge that which is right? But there is no private *interpretation* of the Divine word—and least of all is that committed to the man of sin who exalteth himself in the temple of God, whose coming was after the working of Satan, with lying wonders and all deceivableness of unrighteousness. The unwrested and unperverted word of God does not deceive. He is not a man that he should lie; nor the son of man that he should repent, and change his purpose, or call back his word, when viewed in all its plenitude and all its plainness. Christ is the only Lord of the conscience; his word its only rule; and the Spirit of the Lord the only guide to the truth according to the Scriptures.

V. *Built*, as true believers are, upon the foundation of *apostles and prophets*, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone, the New Testament jointly with the Old reveals other truths, essential to be believed for rightly understanding the prophecies.

How far their testimony reaches is not a matter left to conjecture.

The apostle Peter, after his understanding had been opened to understand the Scriptures, and the Holy Ghost, by whom the prophets spake, had rested in a cloven tongue upon his head, as upon those of the other apostles, testified, *He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you, whom the heavens must receive until THE TIMES OF RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS, WHICH GOD HATH SPOKEN BY THE MOUTH OF ALL HIS PROPHETS SINCE THE WORLD*



BEGAN. The same apostle, in addressing the faithful in Christ Jesus, to whom exceeding great and precious promises are given, wrote both his epistles to stir them up to mindfulness of the words of the prophets and the apostles ; and of this *one thing* he charged them *not to be ignorant, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.* Times the shortest or the longest, the nearest or the most distant, are as one to Him who spake by the prophets. *We, according to his promise,* says the apostle, *look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.* That *promise* is recorded, and the new heavens and new earth included in *things revealed*, in the two last chapters of Isaiah ; as record is borne concerning them in the two last chapters of the book of Revelation. Isaiah and John looked to the same time, as they spoke of the same things by the same names.

“ *The promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith—of faith, that it might be by grace ; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed ; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham ; who is the father of us all (as it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations) before him, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which are not as though they were.*”—Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Samuel, and the prophets—“ *these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise.*” The promise is *sure to all the seed*, to the faithful in Christ Jesus, the children of faithful Abraham. The heirs of the world shall enter into their inheritance ; and from the east and west, the north and the south, shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God. They who are Christ’s look, according to the *promise*, for the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. They know that God is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness ; though the heavens must receive Christ till the times of the restitution of all things spoken of by all the prophets since the world began.

That all the prophets looked to these *times*, and that the restitution of all things is a theme common to them all, is a truth

which does not rest exclusively on their testimony, however abundant and plain, but is also expressly testified in the New Testament also ; so that it is not to be controverted without a denial at once of the testimony both of apostles and prophets.

Looking to the consummation and to the glory, the apostle Paul, in writing to believers in every age, often maintains the truths which he inculcated, by appeals to the prophet Isaiah, as he testifies alike of things now past, and yet to come. “ *Esaias* also crieth concerning Israel, Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved : for he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness ; because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth. And as *Esaias* said before, Except the Lord of Sabaoth (of hosts) had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and had been like unto Gomorrah.” . . . “ They stumbled at that stumbling-stone ; as *it is written*, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling-stone and rock of offence : and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.” “ But *Esaias* is very bold, and saith, I am found of them that sought me not ; I am made manifest to them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.”—According as it is written, “ God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see,” &c. . . . “ If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead ? Blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved ; as it is written (in *Isaiah*), There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from *Jacob* ; for this is my covenant *with them*, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes ; but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.”

It is *manifest* that the apostle, in the things which he himself here speaks by the Spirit of the Lord, as in the passages which he quotes from *Isaiah*, testifies of the stumbling of Israel because of unbelief ; their being cast away in their blindness for a determined period, not yet expired ; the short work which the Lord

will do upon the earth, and which He will finish in the righteousness, with which, according to the prophet, it will overflow ; the coming of the Lord to Zion, and the turning of ungodliness from Jacob ; the unalterable certainty of this covenant *with them*, when their sins shall be taken away ; and life from the dead the result, as it shall issue from Israel's conversion. Beloved for their fathers' sake, the rejection of Israel, however long-continued, is not final. As the word of prophecy is sure, the gifts and calling of God are without repentance or change of purpose. His promises are as sure, though for a time to come, as ever his judgments have been. And mercy shall yet rejoice over judgment.

No less manifest it is, in special reference to these prophecies of Isaiah, that the apostle's argument from them is as conclusive as to the future, as to predicted facts which had been accomplished then ; and that *Israel* or *Jacob* stand as contradistinguished from the *Gentiles* in the testimony of the apostle, as in that of the prophet.

Of the restitution of all things, all the prophets speak. Believers in Jesus, who cleave to the *promise of his coming*, look, according to His promise, for new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness ; and this is the promise recorded in the Old Testament, and repeated in the New, waiting for the time when the Lord shall *finish his work*, and cut it short in righteousness. "He that blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the *God of truth*—because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes. For behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth : and the former shall not be remembered nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create : for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.—I will extend peace to her as a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream."—This is not a word at which to stumble. The Holy One of Israel is a *God of truth*, and the *God of hope*, the *very God of peace*—who is Love. He ceased not to speak by any or by all the prophets, till He spake of an universal restitution : and of these his promises it is written, that His gifts and calling are without repentance.

Whatever, therefore, be the intermediate themes, whatever things then future, but since fulfilled, now true in fact, or written for faith still to rest upon, or however divers the manner in which God spake by them, the testimony of the prophets does not terminate, till passing through and beyond all things else, it reach the great and glorious consummation. Any system of *interpretation* that would change the thoughts and word of God into man's, and throw back their completed testimony to days that are past, or limit it to things that already have arisen, or appropriate to Gentiles now what pertains to a converted world, when all Israel shall be saved, and the Deliverer, whose is the glory that shall then fill the earth, shall turn ungodliness from Jacob,—is a vain tampering not with one or two *Scriptures*, but with many, that cannot be broken, even with the testimony of all the prophets, just as it is true, that *the restitution of all things*, till the times of which the heavens must contain Christ, is spoken of by all the prophets since the world began.

The end is not yet;—it must come as *it is written*. Many predicted judgments have been accomplished; many desolations have reached their prescribed degree. Illustrations that the Lord hath done as He had spoken, already abound. But other words await their accomplishment in their appointed time. Though a perfect portraiture of prophetic truths in all its features, the land of Israel shall not always cry in vain unto the Lord in its mournful desolation. Assyria, Egypt, Moab, Ammon, Philistia, and other lands, bearing the burden that the Lord hath put on them, as it fell on each from the lips of the prophets with a weight that has crushed them, lie under it till desolations shall be past, and all things shall be restored. Though Edom be the *desolation of desolations*, things are written that have to be done in it. There is a song for all nations which they have yet to learn, though the *counsel of the Lord* must first be seen to stand, when all the kingdoms of the earth shall fall, ere all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of the Lord, and his consummating judgments shall overflow with righteousness. Those countries which had the beginning of their history in the Old Testament, have its end also there, as never yet written in any other book than that of the Lord.



The successive great monarchies, or “universal kingdoms,” depicted in forms varied as their own, passed in vision before Daniel, but he beheld till the thrones were cast down, and there was given to the Son of man dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him,—a kingdom which shall not be destroyed. The prophetic field is enlarged at the last till it embrace the world. *The times of the restitution of all things* are yet to come. Spoken of as those times and that restitution were by all the prophets since the world began; these things, though unknown to the world that knows not him who will restore all things, are *revealed* to “the faithful in Christ Jesus.” Of them the apostle speaks as to them he wrote. “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded towards us in *all wisdom* and prudence; having *made known* to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of time he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven (the heavens), and which are in earth, even in him,” Eph. i. 7-10. While mindful of the words spoken of before by the holy prophets, and looking for the new heavens and the new earth according to the *promise* recorded in Isaiah, and knowing that this mystery of his will has been made known by the Father unto them, they who look for these things have not to be unmindful, in reading the sure word of prophecy, that of *this restitution of all things God hath spoken by the mouth of all his prophets since the world began.*

VI. But, farther, for the right apprehension of the things that are revealed, for truly appreciating what thus belongs to us, and rightly believing that which *is written*, spiritual things have to be compared with spiritual, Scripture with Scripture. “What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we may know the things which are freely given us of God. Which things also

we speak, *not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*"<sup>1</sup>—  
 "Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk and drawn from the breast. For precept must be upon precept; line upon line; here a little, and there a little,"<sup>2</sup> &c.

All that the different prophets spake, meted out to them part by part, as unlike to Jesus they received the Spirit by measure, was given by inspiration of one and the same Spirit. These things belong to us, and are freely given us of God. Words which man's wisdom teacheth are the things of a man, which the spirit that is in him teacheth. But while the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth have to be sacredly kept apart from these, *spiritual things* have to be compared *with spiritual*; the Scriptures, which testify of Jesus, have according to his command to be *searched*; noble is the task pronounced to be, of *searching them diligently*; and it is not faith but folly to be *slow of heart to believe ALL that the prophets have spoken*.

The full scriptural testimony on any topic is that which comprises it *all*. The *signs of the times* in the days of the Son of man, which he accused the Jews of not discerning, were not to be seen from one Scripture only, but from many. When Jesus first *opened the understanding* of his disciples that they might *understand the Scriptures, beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scripture the things concerning himself*. Untutored now were that little child in the knowledge of the prophecies concerning the sufferings of Jesus, who could bring but a text or two from the writings of the prophets to show from them what was fulfilled in him. And it would not be out of the mouth of such an one, thus unarmed by the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God, that the enemy and avenger would be stilled as he else might be. Yet having Moses and the prophets, and falsely professing to believe them, fools and hypocrites the wisest of the Pharisees were, who did not discern the signs of the times in the *things* which thus were done, even *so* as they are written not in one Scripture only, but in many. *Line upon line, line upon line*, they did read, but not believe;

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 11-13.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. xxvii. 10, 13.

*precept upon precept, precept upon precept*, they did not regard ; *here a little, and there a little*, they did not compare : stumbling at the word, they were disobedient ; and they fell backward, and were broken, and snared and taken. Thus the seed of Jacob *stumbled* ; and they have not risen to this day. Against many testimonies of the prophets they closed their ears and their eyes, that they could neither hear nor see the things that are *written*. They hardened their hearts lest they should believe. The word did not enter into them, but vain traditions in its stead, and they see not the dawn, though the Sun of righteousness is in the heavens. *They grope at noon-day as the blind gropeth in darkness*. They reject *the Messiah* whom, at the predicted time, their fathers *cut off*, before the city and sanctuary were destroyed. And eighteen hundred years after he came, and was rejected and wounded and slain, they look for his first coming as king to Jerusalem ; while any little child, comparing Scripture with Scripture, and believing the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth, may read in open vision as in lively faith all the things which were written in the law of Moses and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning Christ.

This *example of unbelief*, which has among the people *whose were the prophets* millions of living witnesses to this day, may well be full of instruction in righteousness. It shows the fatal difference between *the words which man's wisdom teacheth*, and those which *the Holy Ghost teacheth* ; between interpreting and believing what is *written* ; between hearing what false teachers who use their tongues *say, He saith*, and what *the Lord hath spoken* by the mouth of his prophets ; between giving to the *sure word of prophecy* another meaning than its own in subjecting it to any private interpretation, and believing that as *thus it is written*, so *thus it must be fulfilled* ; and between setting up prophecies singly to explain them away, and receiving them as the word not of man but of God, that as such by comparing spiritual things with spiritual, Scripture with Scripture, whatever be the subject, all the *testimony* concerning it may be *believed*. It is not by a single ray, even from such a source of celestial light, nor by broken and diverging rays, that the day-star arises in the heart ; but by the combined and concentrated

and direct effulgence of many, that that light beams upon the darkened mind, and the day-star is formed and fixed in the heart.

The unbelief of the Jews may well be a beacon to warn from a rock. Were a similar course to be pursued, and line upon line either wrested or unread, and *here a little taken* and perverted, and *there a little left*, would there not be danger of stumbling still? or would *all* that the prophets have spoken be believed now, any more than it was then? *My Lord delayeth his coming* will not be the language of *the children of the light and of the day*, when the time of the restitution of all things is at the door, of which God hath spoken by the mouth of all the prophets since the world began.

Of that restitution *all* the prophets testify; and not a part only but all their testimony concerning it has to be received. For this purpose spiritual things have to be compared with spiritual, Scripture with Scripture. They are all revealed by the same Spirit of truth; and however discordant human interpretations are, the testimony throughout, however manifold its parts, and numerous the *lines* which separately constitute it, is one.

*The harmony of prophecy* demands for its illustration not merely a paragraph but a volume.—As issuing from the Father of lights, who dwelleth in the light, and in whom is no darkness at all, each separate vision—of things revealed as seen and shown by his prophets—has its own light; and as Scripture is compared with Scripture, light, on any and on every prophetic theme, is added to light, like lamp to lamp, till in their combination shadowy imaginings pass away, and things that were to come to pass are seen, as He who only can has revealed them. All needful light is thus imparted; else He who is both light and love would have given more to his children. Prophecy is the word of God, before that word becomes his work. Deriving its divinity from its Author, it is perfect as a whole, and complete in every part in the relations which it bears. A tree consists of many branches; a river of many springs. It needs many trees to make a forest; and many rivers run into the sea. There are often many separate predictions on a single theme, the union of all of which forms the testimony concerning



it. There are many subjects of prophecy, the union of all of which constitutes *the testimony*. The whole works of God are wonderful, sought out they are of them that have pleasure therein. What were the beauty of his works without their diversity? or what their order without their mutual relations? A tree unworthy of the name would, however straight, be a bare pole without its branches and leaves; and a streamlet without its tributaries would never grow into a river. The lily of the vale springs up beside the palm-tree; flowerets bloom amid the cedars that are in Lebanon; tendrils of ivy hang from the sturdy oak; and creeping plants bear food for the fowls of heaven, where pines rise into the sky. Every plant has its own place; every creature its own form; every fossil its own order and relations; every fibre its purpose; every vesicle its use; every atom its law; even as every orb of heaven has its sphere. In all creation there is nothing isolated. And when the book of nature, at the outside of which men in former ages were contented to look, is now being opened, and facts are familiar in Mechanics' Institutes that before were mysteries in Royal Societies, as the wonderful works of God have been more narrowly searched into, and also more widely viewed, the closer that is the microscopic scrutiny or the chemical analysis to which they are subjected, and the more expansive that is the range of telescopic observation, order becomes visible throughout the universe, and law asserts its dominion where before, while conjecture was rife, chance usurped its place.—The history of man upon the earth has also its law, for which another book than that of nature must be searched. With that history, at the fall, the sure word of prophecy began. Not a prophet since the beginning of the world ceased to testify till he placed his testimony beside the removal of the curse at *the restitution of all things*. Farther than history yet has reached, and far as it has yet to go, went the word of holy men *of old*, as they spake by the Holy Ghost. And that word is finally wide as the world. Whether things that were *revealed* are, as in part, already past, or whether they be seen as they emerge, they present visible proofs of an overruling Providence, of a presiding Deity, as history in its ever onward course does homage to his

word. Earthly commotions disturb it not, but repeat its confirmations, as not a wave of the sea moves without its law, whatever form it may assume. Such *thoughts* may be too high for man; but they are not too high for God. *Things revealed belong to us.* But they can be truly appropriated only as the Lord has given them, as insight into his works can be attained only as they are searched into as He has made them. In giving heed to *the sure word of prophecy*, it has not only to be seen as it is, or to be read as it is written; but also to be viewed in all the relations which it exhibits between *things revealed.* *The Scriptures* are the word of Him whose eyes behold the nations, and without whom not a sparrow can fall unto the ground. *They must be fulfilled*, however minute in human estimation some things which they reveal may seem, or however vast the scope and magnitude of others, when the fulness of the testimony is compared and combined. The eagle's eye, however wide its range, and however distant and minute the objects it can espy, has nothing of the brightness of that of the seers of Israel. Their vision embraced kingdoms in all the phases of their decline, from the plenitude of their glory; they looked on cities, that then glowed in their pride, or thereafter arose, as every spectator beholds them now; they saw their kindred as they are still *wanderers among the nations*; and though one prophet after another added to *the testimony* till that of *all the prophets* of old was completed, each raised his song, some of them often, at the sight of the redemption of Jacob, and the restitution of all things. Nor wide as the book of nature is being opened now, shall it be opened more widely than that of prophecy, till its last page be scanned. And more than ever the time may be now, when this rivalry may begin, and Scripture be compared with Scripture, but only as the Lord spake by the prophets, for *it is written*, "*I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days. . . . But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge (science) shall be increased.*"

VII. Finally, it is written, *I will stand upon my watch, and*

*set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer (marg.) when I am argued with. And the Lord (Jehovah) answered me, and said, Write the vision and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie; THOUGH IT TARRY WAIT FOR IT; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Behold his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.*<sup>1</sup>

Thus the Lord answered the prophet, as he stood upon his watch-tower to see what the Lord would say: and this answer and command of Jehovah, it becomes those to hear and to obey, who stand on theirs, *Though it tarry, wait for it.* Against a precept so distinct and so divine, it is not for erring man to set up his *arguing*, or faithless disciples to demur. Yet *plain* though the precept be, as any words that were ever written, or any commandment that was ever given, proofs of the need of such a rule as an exercise of faith are sadly manifest in the numberless, and often general, transgressions of the precept, from age to age.

In Israel of old it was a proverb in the land, The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth. That proverb ceased in Israel; and these are not the times in which faithful Gentiles will take it up again. The people who used it in their own land many ages ago, have been, for a longer time than they ever yet possessed their inheritance, witnesses for God in every country under heaven, that, however prolonged, the visions which their forefathers despised or perverted did not fail, but surely came, and spake as plainly as the prophets wrote them, or as men with their own eyes see the *things* that, to the very letter, have been fulfilled as they were *written*. Not distinguishing between his first coming in the flesh to suffer and to die, and to rise again from the dead, and his second coming in his kingdom and in his glory, and not believing in the former nor waiting for the latter, the Jews that followed Jesus as at last he went up openly to Jerusalem, thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. For that reason, and also *because he was nigh to Jerusalem*, Jesus, ere he took his last

<sup>1</sup> Hab. ii. 1-4.

short stage on his last journey to that city, delivered the parable of the nobleman who went into a far country to receive unto himself a kingdom and to return ; and who called his servants, and said unto them, Occupy *till* I come. “ Wilt thou *at this time* restore the kingdom to Israel ? ” was the last question which the apostles asked, immediately before his ascension, after his “ being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the *kingdom of God* . ” — It was the prayer of the Apostle Paul for the church of the Thessalonians, some of whom had been deceived into the thought that the coming of the Lord was *then* at hand, The Lord direct your heart into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

Commentators, from the fathers downward, who have indulged the most freely in private interpretation, have as fully admitted that prophecies must necessarily be *literal*, wherever the vision had come and spoken, so as not to admit of any interpretation, or any perversion of the words of the Lord. The thought of man’s heart could not come in collision with the counsel of the Lord, when it was manifestly seen that he had done the things which he had spoken, and that judgments, when accomplished, could not be more plainly written than upon the *tables* of prophecy, that he may run that readeth it. Eusebius, in the fourth century, as clearly maintained, though he less fully proved, from the testimony of Josephus, the actual and literal fulfilment of the prophecies concerning the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, as Lardner in the eighteenth. The history of the Jews ever since forbids any private interpretation of a single prophecy pertaining to their past fate, while yet *Jerusalem that now is, is in bondage with her children*, trodden down as it is of the Gentiles, and scattered as they are throughout the world. But in regard to unaccomplished predictions concerning that city, glorious as are the things which *are written* of it, and that people, precious as are the promises that pertain to them, conjectures, till of late, have been as rife as ever. But not believing that in the appointed time the vision will surely come, and *not lie*, nor waiting for it while it tarries, nor remembering that all or even any of the prophets testified of the restitution of all things, many in past ages have subjected prophecies



by hundreds to private interpretation, and in using their tongues and their pens to show that the Lord hath said what He did not say.

In the vision of Habakkuk it is plainly written, "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea;" and many words written by that prophet may be compared with other testimonies to the Lord's indignation against the heathen and the salvation of his people. Eusebius, who could so triumphantly appeal to the literality of accomplished prophecies, could, notwithstanding, parody those which testify of the restitution of all things. According to him, while lauding in his presence the emperor Constantine, prophecies, recorded in the Sacred Oracles, more than he could enumerate, were then fulfilled in the achievements of his hero, as thus foretold—He shall reign from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth—In his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace, (so long as the moon endureth)—They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.—"Instead of thy fathers shall be *thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth,*"—were, according to the *interpretation*, his sons and others, whom Constantine called Cæsars, and made lords over provinces of Rome. The new Jerusalem, or church, which Constantine or his mother built, was, perhaps, the new Jerusalem of which the Spirit of the Lord had testified by the prophets!

It is written, Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth, and the mountain of the Lord of hosts the holy mountain. Great shall be the peace of her children. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it be also marvellous in my eyes, saith the Lord of hosts?" Not waiting till the visions of the latter-day glory come, as surely they shall, the wrestings and perverting of the words of the Lord, in order to shape them to some fond system or fancied theory, have been many and marvellous. From the first writers of the Alexandrian school down to Dutch commentators, interpreters of prophecy, descending from the watch-tower, where alone they could see what the Lord hath

said, and entering the chambers of imagery, have *argued* as if prophecies were enigmas to be solved rather than truths to be believed, and as if none of the prophets testified of an universal restitution ultimately to appear, and as if no such commandment had been given concerning any vision—*Though it tarry, wait for it.*

Though *interpretations* without number are as discordant as the testimony itself, when fully compared, is harmonious, yet in nothing, perhaps, has there been a more general concurrence between Jewish and Protestant writers than in the substitution of Rome for *Edom*. That name is *plainly written* in the Scriptures, as are the synonymous terms, Idumea and Mount Seir. So write the prophets; but not so uninspired men. Edom ranked among the chief enemies of Israel and of Jerusalem. In the day of Jerusalem's fall the Idumeans were a powerful people, and aided the Jews in vain. That city was destroyed by the Romans, the last and worst enemies of the Jews. Hence, say the Rabbinists, Edom means Rome; the Idumeans, the Romans. Again, Rome has been the persecutor of the saints, the enemy of the Church; and therefore others than Jews change Edom into Rome, and the conclusion is the same, however different the reason. Moab, Ammon, and Philistia, &c., were easily disposed of in the catalogue of enemies of the Church—and the burden of Samaria was, with some show of reason, though none of faith, transferred to *schismatics*, and fancies' farther task was to distinguish them. But Protestants and Romanists again agree to rob Israel of the promises, and the Church, be what it may, becomes the Jerusalem, the Jacob, the Judah, and the Israel of the Jewish prophets; and ere the consummation come, and Abraham and his faithful seed sit down in the kingdom of *heaven*, Gentiles would thus appropriate the blessings promised to Jacob as a *nation*, when their ungodliness and unbelief shall be taken away, and when there shall be a new *earth* as well as a new heaven, on the restitution of all things.

A system of interpretation, seemingly coherent and consistent in its main features, though leading in minuter expositions to notions as diversified as the fancies of men—as to which the

wonder is, not that any should differ, but that any should agree—seemed thus insensibly to steal into the minds of men. Jacob or Israel, Judah and Ephraim, and Jerusalem indiscriminately, when coupled with promises and not with curses, became the *Church*; though itself, as so called, often but a name or an idol. The visions concerning Edom, with all the burden which it bears; and also Moab, Egypt, &c., with the curses that rest on them, but without the blessings that shall follow, symbolized in fancy the enemies of the Church. But, though not waited for, while these visions tarried, and the predicted desolations were not reached or known, they have come and spoken each with its own voice: and as they *surely* come, so as assuredly *they* do not lie. Interpreters who changed names and times, and the *law* with which God had invested his own word, multiplied difficulties instead of resolving doubts; and furnished enemies with weapons from the *altered* armory of heaven. But when the appointed time was come, and visions before disfigured appeared in their own name and form, Volney and other unconscious witnesses, little cognizant of their high vocation, soon followed by others, gave the names, and recorded the facts, by which each vision, that yet has come, speaks as plainly, as surely, and as truly, as it ever could be written by a prophet's hand upon a tablet, or by the sun's beams on a daguerreotype plate, to confute at once the interpreter and the sceptic.

As time advances, visions speak. Not waiting while they tarried, but wresting the *word of the testimony*, and thereby assuming rather that their own words were wise than that the Lord's are true, they who perverted the word heaped proof on proof of the *folly* of not believing *all* that the prophets have spoken. The vindication of the word of the Lord, like the vision, will not tarry. To the present hour, as in the days of the apostles, the writings of the prophets, if as such they be received, must be read as they are written. No man can put his finger upon any word they wrote, or any *thing* they *revealed*, and say—Here the literality of God's word must stop, and man's *interpretation* must begin; here something must be taken from the word of prophecy, and man has a right to take it; or, here something needs to be added to the

word, and man's imagination may supply the lack. Among the *many inventions* which men have sought out, premature interpretations of prophecy have not a scanty measure. But while counsel is thus darkened by words without knowledge—while men wait not till the vision come, and ideal fallacies are substituted for testimonies that *will not lie*, true it is, and ever shall be, that light can be found only where it is, and not where there is none. To the law *and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them*. Each prophecy of Scripture hitherto fulfilled, shows that it is the counsel of the Lord which has ever stood, and has not failed. As *it is written*, so it has been, or must be done. It will surely come, and will not lie. A coloured medium imparts its own tinge to the light of heaven, and to every object on which it rests. Pieces of variedly stained glass, if but large enough to cover the eye when placed before it, change the whole aspect of nature, and each, according to its own, gives it a false and varied hue. The discordant testimony of men viewing the same objects while looking only thus, might well lead others to question the reality of things, and to doubt whether there be any light at all in which they can be truly seen. But let such tainted things be thrown away, and every eye be open and unshaded, and then in the right use of the sense of sight, every object bears witness of itself alike to all, and things are seen as they really are, and as God made the light to show them and the eye to look on them. So it is with the word of nature's God, when looked at in unveiled and unshaded vision with the eye of faith. It cannot be seen aright in the coloured glasses, formed by art and man's device, of which each person or party would choose his own adjunctory invention or favourite hue. Prophetic history in all its parts has yet to terminate its course. The field already passed is plain and clear. *Experience* might here instruct and stablish a wavering faith. As each vision has come, it has trampled interpretations in the dust; as each vision has spoken, it has shown that they did lie, and that *it* does not. Edom is literally Edom, Moab is Moab, Samaria is Samaria, Egypt is Egypt, and Judah, Judah; Jacob, Jacob; and *Jerusalem* is Jerusalem, with her name graven on the palms of the



hands of the Lord, though she *now is*, but shall not always be, in bondage with her children. All that Isaiah and the other prophets have said of each and all of these, as hitherto fulfilled, is read in their destiny; as each has its own marks as well as its own name. The visions which have not *lied* as to the past, will not lie as to the future. No power of man can stay their progress; no wisdom of man can change their meaning. Those that have yet to come in their appointed time, will as *surely come* and speak, as many have already spoken, so as to cause their own voice to be heard, whatever lingering *dreams* may yet be told. He that hath an ear let him hear what the God of truth hath spoken; he that hath an eye let him look with a single and unshaded eye on the things that have been, and are, and yet shall be, as the light of his sure word does show them. "The vision is yet for an appointed time, but *at the end* it shall speak, and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Behold his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith,"—his faith in God's word as *it is written*, and not in man's interpretation in its stead.

The key to the prophecies of Isaiah hangs upon the threshold. His vision, if his testimony be believed, is that "which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem," in the days of the four kings during whose reign he prophesied. Jesus testified that *salvation is of the Jews*. *Glorious things* are written of Jerusalem, the city of the Lord, where the *decease* of Jesus was *accomplished*. *All Israel*, as distinct from the Gentiles, *shall be saved*. And what, let an interpreter answer, *shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?* The history of *Judah* is not finished. The things that Isaiah saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem, and that reach to the glorious consummation, and *the times of the restitution of all things*, were not written for antiquarians, though of the nineteenth century of the Christian era. At the middle of it the Jews now exercise an influence throughout Europe, the belief of the possibility of which would have been derided in former ages. Newly restored to liberties long unknown to them, they occupy a chief place among the "rationalists" and

revolutionists of Europe,<sup>1</sup> so as to show at length that they are not a race which shall for ever be neglected or despised. Three

<sup>1</sup> That the Jews are, after many ages of degradation and oppression, entering on a *transition state*, (and what is not?) notorious facts begin to indicate. The newspaper press not unfrequently now proclaims to the world facts altogether new in their history. Previous ages have seen other contrasts between Gentiles and Jews than the following, which, like others, might excite a doubt in the mind of a rationalist, whether the old order may not yet return of Jews and Gentiles: "It would not be difficult to prove that most of the intellectual activity of Germany at this moment is Jewish; and to a great extent is used to the destruction of the institutions and political systems of the several states. Why the Hebrew element is so active in Germany, and why the Saxon spirit has become so sluggish, is a problem not easy to solve.—It may be predicted almost with certainty that a democratic journal in Germany will be edited by a Jew, and that in a barricade combat the leader is a Frenchman or a Pole. Both facts have been proved over and over again in the criminal courts."—*The Times*, 17th November 1849. "Their Christian brethren (?) in Cracow were anything but inclined to recognise *paragraph* 1 of the constitution, which places every Austrian subject on the same political footing, be he Jew or Gentile.—It is not in this instance alone that the authorities have been obliged to interfere in favour of the Jews, whose *newly recognised rights* are gall and wormwood to a considerable portion of the nation.—It is no exaggeration to say that 90 out of every 100 belong to the extreme radical party. An assertion made a short time since by your Prussian correspondent is perfectly correct, for whenever a particularly violent democratic article appears in our papers, it may almost invariably be traced to a Jewish pen. The reason of this I am totally unable to explain, but the fact is undeniable."—*Times*, 31st December 1849, *Austrian Correspondent*. Time may show whether the inexplicable fact, with its results and speedy consequents, were left untold in the sure word of prophecy: "*Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay; for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not?—Is it not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest? and in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness,*" Is. xxix. 16-18. Whatever Jew or Gentile devise and do, their devices and doings are in the hands of the Lord as *clay* in those of the *potter*. And other testimonies are not wanting that the infidelity and revolutionary spirit which Israel has at last assumed, shall thus be used to *hasten* his work in its time, and to accomplish it till men shall *consider it perfectly*, and the *deaf hear the words of the book*, which before they said was *sealed*.

"The Hebrew element" supplies many a "problem" which philosophy itself finds "not easy to solve." A "fact" may be undeniable, and yet confessedly political men may be "totally unable to solve it." But problems

thousand three hundred years have passed away, in which kingdoms after kingdoms have arisen, flourished, and faded, since Balaam, in a *vision of the Almighty*, advertised Balak, what the people Israel, a race then tented on the plains of Moab, would do in the latter days. *Theirs*, alone among all *nations*, are the *promises*. But, as then that prophet said by a wisdom not his own, when his king commanded him, saying, "Come, curse me Jacob, and come, defy Israel;" surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought? There is no divination, no enchantment, no private interpretation, that can rob Jacob of the promises, were ungodliness turned from him, or disannul the counsel and purposes of the Lord concerning the people, not numbered among the nations, whom he formed for his own glory, and who shall show forth his praise. Lowly obeisance before rulers is still practised in the East; and the inferior rises from the ground in homage to the superior who approaches him. But when the king of Moab asked the man who heard the words of the Lord, and knew the knowledge of the Most High, What hath the Lord spoken?—his words were, "Rise up, Balak, and hear; hearken unto me, thou son of Zippor, God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good. Behold I have received commandment to bless; *and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it.*" No man can. *The Lord his God is with him; and the shout of a king among them.* As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways. For as the rain watereth the earth and maketh it bring forth, so shall be my word that cometh forth out of my mouth—for ye shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace. That Jacob has been a *worm*, long trodden under the unsparing foot of the unpitying

that resolutely defy all other modes of extrication, yield to the rule that resolves them. Of *Judah*, and the Hebrew element, as the world has yet to witness its operation, far otherwise than in past ages or the present day, Isaiah records the things which he saw. And problems are made plain by *the testimony*.

Gentile, is not a reason why the Lord should not make that worm a new sharp threshing instrument, that shall thresh the mountains and make the hills as chaff. That the sons of Jacob were slaves in Egypt and captives in Assyria and Babylon, is not any reason that the Egyptian shall not serve with the Assyrian, when Israel shall be the inheritance of the Lord, and take up a proverb against Babylon. That the Jews, as it is *written*, have been a *curse* among all nations, is not a reason that they shall not be a blessing among them all, but it is a reason, according to the same sure word of prophecy, that they shall. That joy unspeakable and full of glory, such as has not been written and could not be conceived, awaits all the children of faithful Abraham in the *new heavens*, is not a reason, and cannot lead unto the wish, that the children of Abraham, both in the flesh and in the faith, should inherit in the *new earth* the promises whereby the *everlasting covenant* shall stand, and Abraham and his seed be a blessing to all the families of the earth, when the Lord shall have created *Jerusalem* a rejoicing, and her people a joy. It is now enough for Gentile believers that branches *wild by nature*, have been grafted into the *good olive-tree*; its *natural branches* shall not be cut off always, nor Israel be for ever separated from Israel's God. There is a reason that *all Israel shall be saved*. *They shall be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again*. Then shall be seen what Isaiah saw, as he looked beyond the time when the wrath of the Lord should continue to rest on Judah and Jerusalem. The hand that of old was stretched out to smite and to scatter, shall be plucked out of his bosom to gather and to save—even that of Israel's king of old, *working salvation in the midst of the earth*. The Redeemer shall come to Zion. Though the vision tarry, wait for it—he will not tarry. To them that look for him, he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry. He will come; and all his saints with him. Death shall be swallowed up of victory, when he shall reign in Mount Zion and in *Jerusalem*, and before his ancients gloriously. Then they who now hear his voice and live, shall wake at his voice and sing, though they slept in the dust. Obedient to his voice before, they shall obey him then, and enter at his word into the kingdom pre-



pared for them from the foundations of the world. They were strangers and pilgrims on the earth, desiring a better even a heavenly inheritance. It will be time enough for them to *receive the promise* when Abraham shall receive it; and blessedness enough for them, more than earth could contain, to sit down with him in the kingdom of God.

In reading and understanding the book of *Isaiah as it is*, Judah and Jerusalem may be seen in faith as Isaiah saw them in vision—not only as they have been and are, but also as they yet shall be. It is the design of the following treatise to show, divested of all imaginative interpretation and speculations, what that prophet of the Lord *expressly testifies*. Twenty-seven years, nearly a generation, have passed away since the writer of these lines, in a short preface to the first edition of the Evidence of Prophecy, expressed his hope that it might not be altogether unproductive of good. Concerning the present volume, as it issues from the press, he cherishes such a hope anew. The mercy of the Lord is on them that fear him from generation to generation. It would be the fault of the present if the next does not know him more, and serve him better. *Filius ante patrem*, in any case, especially in that, may well be a cheering thought to a father's heart. But none who know the grace of God in truth, and who seek the glory that cometh from God only, can be satisfied with offering up less than the prayer of Moses by whom the law was given, *Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them!* Would God—it may be added too—that none of the Lord's people were *slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken*. As to Judah and Jerusalem, instead of any warrant for perverting the word of the Lord, or *reversing the promises*, the commandment is divine that is thus addressed to the watchmen that hear it, *Ye that make mention of the Lord—ye that are his remembrancers—keep not silence, and give the Lord no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.*



## PREFACE.

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AN exposition of Isaiah might seem the most superfluous of undertakings when these are already so numerous, —Jewish and Latin, Dutch and German, English and American. The title of the following sketch of what Isaiah saw, indicates the difference between it and existing commentaries. An illustration will show still more clearly wherein it varies from its predecessors. In the last verse of the 12th chapter—one of the first instances in which the word “Zion” occurs in the prophet—it is written, “Cry out, and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.” Protestant Commentators have understood by Zion, in this and in similar passages, the Church. Without giving the exposition of more ancient Expositors downwards from the time of Vitringa, whose voluminous and massive work is the first full Protestant commentary on Isaiah, and is the rich and common mine from which succeeding writers have dug, what is the comment of the modern and more popularly known Expositors, Lowth, Henderson, and Scott in this country, and Barnes and Alexander in America?

Lowth has no comment on verse 12; but his remarks on the whole chapter show how he understood the term “Zion.” “This hymn,” he writes, “seems, by its whole

tenor, and by many expressions in it, much better calculated for the use of *the Christian Church* than for the Jewish in any circumstances, or at any time, that can be assigned." Neither does Henderson offer any remark on the concluding verse ; but in his summary of the subjects of the song he says, "This chapter contains a hymn of praise to be sung by *the Church* on her restoration from captivity." Scott heads the chapter thus: "A hymn of praise for *the Church*, on the accomplishment of the preceding prophecies ;" and in his remarks on verses 4-6, he writes, "In the day when the Lord shall do so great things for *his Church* ; his people shall excite each other to praise him for the past." He includes the Jews, however, although not in their national capacity, for he adds, "The inhabitants of Zion, the Church converted from that chosen race, will cry aloud, and shout for joy." Barnes again writes in his analysis of the chapter, "This chapter is properly an expression of the feelings of the redeemed *people of God*, in view of his great mercy in interposing to save them." And the clause "Thou inhabitant of Zion," he paraphrases thus, "that is, they who are numbered with *the people of God*." So Alexander explains the same clause "the people, or *the Church* personified as a woman."

Similar views are generally given by these Commentators<sup>1</sup> of the other passages referring to Israel, although not in every instance ; this application being sometimes so evidently impracticable that the principle of "spiritualizing" is thrown overboard, and the literal exposition is adopted by compulsion. The confusion attending such a system is abundantly exemplified in the introductory re-

<sup>1</sup> In the latter part of his learned and valuable work, Henderson, apparently finding the other impracticable, adopts the literal exposition.



marks of Alexander, the latest of these Commentators, on what he terms "the later prophecies of Isaiah," commencing with the 40th chapter. While there is nothing whatever in the text to indicate any such singular and violent transitions, he refers that chapter to the Israel of God, or true Church; the 43d, &c., to the literal Israel; the 49th, &c., to the true Israel, the Church; the first part of the 51st to the literal Israel, the chosen people; the close of the 51st and the 52d, &c., to the Church; the last part of the 56th and the first of the 57th to the carnal or literal Israel; the close of the 57th to the true Israel; the 58th to the carnal Israel; the 60th, &c., to the true Israel; the 64th, &c., to the literal Israel; and the close of the 65th and the 66th chapters to the spiritual and the literal Israel alternately, according as blessing or cursing is the subject of the particular verse. Of such a system the remarks of an excellent author—who does not in this instance, however, apply his own rule—do not seem too harsh a description, "We love not the spiritualizers of Scripture. They give it meanings which it never had, finding facts in figures and figures in facts, just as it suits their vain fancies, till sober-minded people are tempted to think that it has no certain and fixed sense in it at all."

Against such a system, and in support of as literal an exposition of the unfulfilled prophecies of Isaiah relative to Israel's condition as is demanded, and is now universally assented to, in the case of fulfilled prophecy, the following reasons are advanced:—

1. *The title of the book requires that Israel, not the Church, be regarded as the subject of Isaiah's prophesying. The vision is said to be concerning Judah and Jerusalem,*

see i. 1. This is certainly the title not of the first vision only, but of the whole book, as it applies to all that Isaiah saw during the reigns of the four kings named, that is, during his whole prophetic life ; and it is not to be supposed that the period of his seeing one vision should have extended over the time embraced by the reigns of four kings. To refer, therefore, prophecies regarding Judah to the Church is a misapplication in defiance of the express title of Isaiah.

2. *The circumstance, that Isaiah and the Jews of his day, and of following ages, could have understood the references to Judah, Israel, Zion, Jerusalem, only literally, requires that Israel, not the Church, be regarded as the subject of Isaiah's prophesying.* The Church, in the sense in which it is now held, had then no existence apart from Israel. It was to them in their national, not in their Church capacity, that their blessings, spiritual and temporal, were covenanted. The Church has never had temporal blessings covenanted to it ; if anything has been made sure, it is the want of them : " In the world ye *shall have tribulation.*" If the promises and precepts regarding Zion, as, for example, " The Lord shall comfort Zion, he will comfort all her waste places ;" " Pray for the peace of Jerusalem ; they shall prosper that love thee,"—if these were to be understood of the Church, then Isaiah and the Jews were grievously mistaken, blinded, deceived ; they were in their ignorance expecting blessings—they were asking favour for what they had no conception of,—for what has generally scorned and often trampled upon them.

3. *Regard for the litera scripta of the inspired volume requires that Israel, not the Church, be regarded as the*

*subject of Isaiah's prophesying.* To apply to the Church what is limited by the letter of Scripture to Israel, is to take a liberty which would be unwarrantable in the case of any profane writing. Where is this license to stop? If Jerusalem does not mean Jerusalem; if Church may be substituted at will and random for Zion, why may not the same liberty be taken with any other portion of the Sacred Word? Socinianism, Popery, and other heresies, rest on a non-natural exposition of the scriptural text; but with what justice may their advocates turn round and assert that their loose exposition of Scripture is literal in comparison of the license taken by Calvinistic commentators? No doubt, in a few instances in the New Testament, such terms as "Israel," "Jerusalem," are used figuratively, but then it is always in a manner which indicates that they are figurative; as in the expressions, "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem," "the Jerusalem which is from above," "the new Jerusalem;" but in the prophetical, as in the historical portions of Scripture, there is nothing to indicate, in a single instance, that Zion, Israel, Jerusalem, are not to be literally understood.

This argument is confirmed by the circumstance, that in Isaiah a contrast is often made between Israel and the Gentiles. When this occurs in the New Testament, as in the 11th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, it is regarded as decisive of the point that Israel is to be understood literally; as to explain Israel in that passage of the Church would involve the whole in confusion, and is impracticable: and it is as unwarrantable in Old Testament as in New Testament prophecy. Besides, the apostle identifies the "Zion" and "Jacob" of which he writes,

with the "Zion" and "Jacob" of Isaiah. "So all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob," Romans xi. 26; compare Isaiah lix. 20. It may be remarked, too, that here, as in other instances, the prophet identifies Zion with Jacob or Israel, and this latter expression is not understood to be applicable to the Church.

4. *Consistency requires that Israel, not the Church, be regarded as the subject of Isaiah's prophesying.* Many of these predictions cannot be applied in any natural sense to the Church, those particularly which describe the sins of the nation—their pride, covetousness, and oppression; and their consequent judgments,—barren fields, emptied cities, and such like. References to these are, however, often intermingled with predictions of blessings; and hence it has been found necessary, in the common expositions, to mix up the literal Israel with the Church; the blessings, with marvellous unfairness in the distribution, being all applied to the latter; while the curses are all reserved for the Jews, although the whole are obviously applied to the same party by the prophet. Thus Henderson heads the 3d chapter—one of judgment—thus: "The prophet now announces the severe privations to which *the Jews* would be subject;" while he heads the following chapter—one of blessing, but a continuation of the same vision—after the first verse, thus: Having depicted the wickedness of the Jews—"the prophet devotes this short chapter to an announcement of the glory and felicity of *the Church* in the time of the Messiah." So, in reference to the 3d chapter, Alexander says, "This chapter continues the threatenings *against Judah* on ac-



count of the prevailing iniquities ;” while of the 4th he writes, “ Besides the first verse, this chapter contains a prophecy of Christ, and of the future condition of *the Church*,” although it is expressly foretold that the blessings enumerated are *for them that are escaped of Israel* (2); that is *every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem* who are to be called holy unto the Lord. The same thing occurs repeatedly in the course of a single chapter. Thus in the 65th, verses 11, 12, are headed thus by Alexander: “ He then reverts to the *idolatrous Jews*, and threatens them with condign punishment ;” and verses 13-16, “ The fate of the unbelieving carnal Israel is compared with that of the *true spiritual Israel* ;” and the remainder, which describes the final blessedness of Israel, is applied to the gospel dispensation. Similarly in Scott, verses 11-15, are said, correctly, to describe “ the miseries coming on *the unbelieving Jews* ;” while verses 16-25, which are descriptive of the future blessings of the same class as are threatened with the previous curses, are said to predict “ the glories and privileges of *the Church* in the latter days.” How common this application of the curses, and this misapplication of the blessings of prophecy is, is shown by the headings of the English version. How contrary it is to every principle of reason and logic, and therefore how false and unscriptural the foundation must be on which such a scheme of exposition rests, it is needless to point out.

5. *The scriptural and prophetical history of Israel corroborates the view that Israel, not the Church, is the subject of Isaiah’s prophesying.* The whole of the historical parts of the Old Testament, and such of the prophetical as are already fulfilled, are occupied almost exclu-

sively with the history of the seed of Jacob, or of those contemporaneous nations with whose history theirs is interlinked. How little of prophecy relates to all other nations put together in comparison of what relates to the Jews! Much also of the New Testament is occupied with them. And why should not the unfulfilled portion of Scripture relate like the rest of it to the same people? especially when it is considered that Israel's history differs from every other in being not only scriptural, but also prophetical. Of what prominent event is it not true that it was foretold? and even of how many minute incidents was this the case? Their possession of Canaan—their sojourn in Egypt—their great prosperity—their captivity in Babylon—their dispersion over the earth—their sins—their curses and their blessings, all formed the subject of prophecy. And even to the most minute details was this the case. Thus not only is the general fact of the removal of the nation to Egypt predicted, but the various particulars also—that they would serve the Egyptians—that they would be oppressed by them—that their bondage would continue for 400 years—that Egypt would be visited with judgments for their treatment of Israel—that they would carry off with them the treasures of Egypt, Gen. xv. 13, 14. Such being the case, might it not be expected that their history subsequent to the period of their general dispersion—their long protracted expatriation and their coming restoration—would also be scriptural and prophetical? But if the Church is substituted for Israel in unfulfilled prophecy, their scriptural history is made to cease at its most interesting period.

6. *The national history of Israel corroborates the view that Israel, not the Church, is the subject of Isaiah's pro-*

*phesying*. How does their present condition contrast with that of the most ancient cotemporary kingdoms? These have long since experienced their decline and fall; with a few exceptions they are annihilated. But that peculiar people, who flourished long before the kingdoms of Babylon, Greece, or Rome were heard of, still exist. Subjected to every ignominy and injury, they are still a people; oppressed by every nation, they have been crushed by none; dispersed among every race, they have amalgamated with none; after 1800 years of banishment, they are as distinct a race as they were in the days of Solomon. How unnatural a termination to a career so singular, that they should now disappear—that they should be preserved so long only for extinction! Can such be the purposes of God concerning them, after such marvellous dealings with them? How would the divine glory—the great end for which they have been made what they are—be thus magnified? With their land preserved empty and open for their reception, how much more probable that they should be preserved for it. Recent European commotions—the shattering of institutions and the levelling of monarchies that looked eternal—have prepared the minds of men for anything. The flight of the Pope in disguise from Rome is a strange sight in comparison of the return of the Jews to Palestine. Understand the unfulfilled predictions regarding Israel of the Church, and how lame and commonplace is the issue of that nation's hitherto unparalleled career:—understand them as literally as those already fulfilled, and how fitting a termination do they form to her history?

The application of the unfulfilled predictions of prophecy regarding Israel to the Church is easily explained.

The early commentators, ignorant of the literal accomplishment of the prophecies regarding Edom, Moab, and the other enemies of the Jews, which in their day were unfulfilled or unknown, interpreted them of the enemies of the Church, and were thus drawn to apply those regarding Israel also figuratively to the Church. That application of the former class of prophecies has been exploded by the discoveries of modern travellers. But, while later expositors have abandoned thus far the views of their predecessors, they have retained them in regard to Israel; although the same consistency which led the earlier commentators to understand both classes of predictions figuratively should have led the others to understand both literally. To do so detracts nothing from the value of the promises made, particularly in the New Testament, to the Church of Christ. These rest on a foundation of their own, which no exposition of prophecy one way or another can affect. But it is in connexion with Israel that the fulness and freeness of the promises of the Gospel are best developed. The facts of Scripture are the best expositors of its promises. Such facts as the divine remonstrances with the antediluvian world for 120 years, through Noah, the preacher of righteousness; or the affectionate and faithful pleading of Christ with the traitor at the first sacramental table, in which he appears to have used kindness and warning alike in vain, "troubled in spirit" when he saw that his last attempts to reclaim the apostate disciple were futile; or the command to the disciples to begin at Jerusalem their preaching of the everlasting gospel—to offer his salvation first to the betrayers and murderers of the Lord of life—to urge those who shed the blood of Christ first to wash in it; these



facts are the best commentary on the promises that the blood of Jesus cleanseth from *all* sin—that God is able to save *to the uttermost*. After this none need despair. And similarly the fact, for example, that the Jewish nation, with the accumulated guilt of ages on its head, who have not only shed, but trampled on the blood of the Son of God and counted it an unholy thing, shall yet sing, *He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness*, Is. lxi. 10, illustrates better than any language the promise—that *the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, is unto and upon all them that believe*. To understand the prophecies regarding Israel literally, is not thus to diminish, but to enhance the value of Scripture. To spiritualize here is to literalize; it is the literal Scripture which is most spiritual. That must be most spiritual which the Spirit, through the prophet, hath written. It is by the word, not by any fanciful interpretation of it, that man is begotten again; it is by the truth that he is sanctified.

It is no argument for regarding prophetic with less interest than gospel Scripture, that it is unfulfilled, perhaps dark. The same argument would have justified the Jews before our Lord's day in neglecting those Scriptures which showed before of the coming of the Just One, and would justify all men in doubting or disregarding the approach of the judgment-day. The most difficult apparently of all prophecy, the book of Revelation, is prefaced with this encouragement, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy." There is the command to "take heed" to the "more sure word of prophecy;" and there is the promise of the Spirit to "guide into *all* truth," and to show "*things to come*."

The study of prophecy—one of the things “revealed”—is not therefore to be classed, as has been done, with poring over such “secret things” as “the future state of the heathen,” or “the destiny of idiots.” But it has to be studied, not by the sparks of one’s own kindling—not by the *ignis fatuus* of fancy—but by its own light.

How much is the pleasure of the student enhanced by the use of the map, or that of the tourist by reference to the hand-book of the country he traverses? Similar is the advantage of prophecy. It is the map on which are sketched—the guide-book in which are recorded—by an Almighty finger, the great events of this world’s history; and where these, whether past or passing or future, may be traced.

The limits of the following volume have prohibited its assuming either an exegetical, or what is termed a practical character, even if the number and excellence of critical and popular commentaries did not make such an attempt superfluous. If it help to illustrate the “simplicity that is in Christ;” to cast down “vain imaginations;” and to indicate “what saith the Scripture,” its purpose will be served.

# ISAIAH.

## CHAPTER I.

THIS chapter contains the title of the whole book ; a general description of the depravity of the Jewish nation, mingled with remonstrances against their sin, and invitations to turn from it ; and a prediction of their final deliverance from all their iniquities.

1. *The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.*

This verse forms the title of the whole book. There are introduced in it the party to whom the revelation it contains was communicated, Isaiah—the manner of the revelation, by vision—the subject of it, Judah and Jerusalem,—and the time when it was conveyed to the prophet, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Attention to the second and third of these particulars especially, will preserve from many of the fanciful opinions which have been advanced in the various expositions of this book. The subject of it is stated as expressly as language can, to be Judah and Jerusalem, although, according to the common opinions held by commentators,

the book ought to have been introduced as one concerning the Church. As the title of any book indicates, or ought to indicate, its subject, so, in this case, the title indicates the subject on which Isaiah prophesied. Collateral subjects are introduced, as must be the case in every historical narration, as those of Babylon, Tyre, &c. ; but all these will be found to bear upon the leading subject of the book. This has been in a great measure overlooked ; and the Church has been made the subject, in many parts of the prophecies which follow, in defiance of the title given by the prophet.

Verses 2-23, contain a description of the state of the Jewish nation, expressed generally in the language of complaint, the most affecting of any in which the Almighty addresses his creatures. The passage appears to be applied by all commentators to the condition of Israel at the time when Isaiah prophesied ; but there are difficulties in the way of this application. For what was the condition of Judah in the time of these four kings ? Uzziah and Jotham are numbered among the good kings of Judah, and their reigns are represented as on the whole prosperous. Of the former it is said that his name spread far abroad : “ for he was marvellously helped till he was strong,” 2 Chron. xxvi. 15 ; and of the latter, that he “ became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God,” 2 Chron. xxvii. 6. But it was different in the reign of Ahaz, a wicked prince. In regard to him it is written, that “ the Lord delivered him into the hand of the King of Syria ; and they smote him, and carried away a great multitude of them captives,” 2 Chron. xxviii. 5. At the beginning of the reign of Hezekiah, that good king thus describes the calamities of the nation when he ascended the throne : “ Our fathers have trespassed, and done that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord our God, and have forsaken him, and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the Lord.”



“Wherefore the wrath of the Lord was upon Judah and Jerusalem, and he hath delivered them to trouble, to astonishment, and to hissing,” 2 Chron. xxix. 6, 8. But Hezekiah threw off the Assyrian yoke, and restored the worship of the true God. Prosperity returned to Judah, and God healed the people. Such was the state of Judah in the days of these kings. Unless during the reign of Ahaz, when idolatry was established in its basest forms, and many of the nation were slain or led into captivity by their enemies, the period was not marked by peculiar sin or calamity.

The passage is not, therefore, descriptive of the condition of the nation before the time of Ahaz. It can scarcely be understood even of the days of that wicked king, so exceedingly dark is the picture here drawn of Judah's state. But what is decisive against such an opinion is, that the view of Judah's condition here represented was seen in *vision*. There could be no purpose served by shewing to Isaiah in vision their state when he lived—he could see that without any miraculous vision—he did see it with his bodily eye. The vision of the prophet appears to embrace a general view of the iniquity of the Jews—the whole, past, present, and future, is placed before his eye. To the eye of God, all that is past or to come is really present. And similarly in the vision of the prophet. His eye appears to take in at one glance, like that of a spectator on a mountain-top gazing on the far-stretching landscape beneath, the whole iniquity of the nation. Applying the description even to the days of Ahaz, it seems overdrawn; but it is not so if understood of the ungodliness of the Jews up to the present hour, and onwards to the day of their conversion, the point to which the eye is carried as it passes along this description of their guilt. And this view is quite consistent with the circumstance of this vision being placed first in order. It may have been seen as well during the life of Uzziah,

and a comparatively pure state of the Jewish people, as in the times of Ahaz.

The passage, however, is not wholly descriptive of Jewish guilt and degradation: it is interspersed with invitations to repentance, the more striking that they are placed side by side with the corruptions of those to whom they are addressed; just as during the whole history of Judah, offers of mercy have been ever mingled with the infliction of judgments.

2. *Hear, O heavens; and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.*

The language, as stated before, is that of complaint. It is not that of threatening—it is not that of reproach—it is not that of expostulation merely, but it is peculiarly that of complaint—the most wonderful, and also the most touching, that the Almighty can employ. How wonderful the spectacle of the Creator complaining of the creature—God complaining of man—the Father complaining of the child; and complaining, too, of iniquity aggravated to the uttermost. It was such as inanimate nature—as the heavens and the earth—might understand and blush for. It was iniquity of a very heinous description—the rebellion of children. The Jews were such in a sense in which no other part of the human race have been. God made a covenant with Adam in his state of innocence. He made a covenant also with Christ in behalf of as many as he should save; but with no portion of the human race, in their fallen state, has he entered into covenant as he did with Israel.

3. *The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.*

So low is the nation represented as having sunk, that their ingratitude is said to be unparalleled even among the brutes. Not only the most intelligent of the beasts, as the horse; or the fiercest and most courageous of

them, as the lion ; but even the most stubborn of them, as the ox and the ass, recognise their benefactor—they know the hand that feeds them, and the place where they are fed, but Judah has not done so.

4. *Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, (or, of heaviness,) a seed of evil-doers, children that are corrupters ! they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward, (or, alienated, or, separated.)*

Other aggravations of their sin are enumerated. It was universal—not that of individuals, but of the nation—of a whole people. It was so immense, that they staggered under it as beneath a heavy load. It was not so with their fathers. They were the posterity of faithful Abraham, but the seed had degenerated—it was one of evil-doers. Not only were they themselves corrupt, but they had corrupted others. Not only had they forsaken the Lord, they had turned their backs on him. How clearly do we see in this glass the face of Judah. What nation has been more steeped in guilt than this ? It has been distinguished as much by the enormity of its sins as by the magnitude of its privileges. It is needless to illustrate, either from sacred or profane history, the truth of Isaiah's vision, so familiar is every reader with its faithfulness. To describe the sinfulness of Israel would be to recapitulate their history almost from the beginning to the present hour.

5, 6. *Why should ye be stricken any more ? ye will revolt more and more, (or, increase revolt.) The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it ; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores : they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment, (or, oil.)*

There is here a touching outburst of divine feeling caused by the hopelessness of their condition. The Almighty is represented as wearying of chastisement, which was only aggravating the disease which it was intended to cure—as on the point of abandoning the case in despair. There

is a point beyond which it is vain to carry the application of a remedy in the case of the festering body, and that point the Jewish nation is represented as having reached. When the cure is hopeless, fresh remedies only excite fruitless torture, which it is needless to inflict—which it is better to spare the sufferer. When fire does not melt, it hardens—when correction does not benefit the child, it alienates him more. So it has been with Israel. There has been no lack of discipline used by the Almighty in his dealings with that people—if kindness could have retained them, they would not have revolted; and if judgment could have reclaimed them, they would have been recovered. But no amount of chastisement has arrested their spiritual disease; it has gone on increasing until they have appeared in the sight of God as a body so diseased in every spot as to form one hideous mass of sores.

Dark as is the picture presented to Isaiah of what Israel was to become, how faithful has it proved! John the Baptist addresses the nation in his day as a generation of vipers; and our Lord, as an evil and adulterous generation, as of their father the devil, as doing the deeds of their father. The scriptural description of them is corroborated by Josephus. Of the same period in their history, he says—“Indeed, that was a time most fertile in all manner of wicked practices, insomuch that no kind of evil practices were then left undone; nor could any one so much as devise any bad thing that was new, so deeply were they all infected, and strove with one another in their single capacity, and in their communities, which should run the greatest lengths in impiety towards God, and in unjust actions towards their neighbours.”—*Wars*, B. viii. c. 1. In another passage, speaking of the Jewish leaders, he writes—“I suppose that had the Romans made any longer delay in coming against these villains, the city would either have been swallowed up by the ground opening upon them, or been overflowed by water, or else been



destroyed by such thunder as the country of Sodom perished by, for it brought forth a generation of men much more atheistical than were those that suffered such punishments."—*B. v. c. 13, 3, 6.*

*7-9. Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by (or, as the overthrow of) strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.*

After the ungodliness of the nation had passed before the eye of the prophet in vision, the subject which next presents itself is the desolation of their land—the effect of their guilt. How accurately does this prophetic description represent what has been for many ages the desolation of Judea. In every particular has it been fulfilled. Not a traveller has visited it without bearing witness to the fact that it is "desolate." Next to the desolation which broods over it, the multitude of ruined towns strikes the eye, and these marked by the utter destruction which distinguishes "cities burnt by fire." Chaldeans, Persians, Romans, Arabs, Egyptians, Tartars, Turks, and other strangers, have, in succession, devoured it, until there is little left to destroy; and that in the presence of the Jews, who have seen it again and again laid waste, without the power to move a finger or lift up a voice in its behalf. In many cases before their present exile from Judea, and more frequently since, they have been mere onlookers of the calamities of their country. The nation has become feeble, solitary, and desolate (8), like the temporary and lonesome hut which, in the countries of the East, shelters the watchman who protects the vineyard, or the garden of cucumbers. They have been reduced to an isolated condition; they have been under the ban of every other nation, and have been made the common object of oppression, like a besieged city which is assaulted on all sides.

Their escape from the utter annihilation which befell the cities of the plain has been most miraculous (9) ; and the desolation of their country has been almost as complete as if it had been scorched by fire and brimstone, and the waters of another Dead Sea had covered it. A remnant, however, has survived every disaster, else they would have been altogether as Sodom and Gomorrah.

10, 11. *Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom ; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me ? saith the Lord : I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts ; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats, (or, great he-goats.)*

Mingled with the sins and judgments of the Jewish nation, there is introduced, in the vision of their future history, the language of warning and remonstrance (10-15). This has always run parallel with the others, especially before their national overthrow by the Romans, after their rejection of the Messiah. One peculiarity of the nation, amid all their iniquities and calamities, has been their observance of the Levitical ordinances. Notwithstanding all the changes to which they have been subjected, their attachment to their religious forms and customs has never been obliterated. They have maintained them, at least in as far as they could be maintained out of Jerusalem, in the days of their deepest degeneracy, and they have clung to them in the season of their sharpest persecution ; they have complied with the ritual, while they have trampled upon the moral law. So prominent a feature is this of the Jewish character, that it is introduced in the vision of the prophet. It might be supposed that this would be one redeeming point in the dark picture, but it is not so ; it forms one of the most blackening which their character presents. From the position of the passage, it would appear that it describes one chief cause of the nation's troubles. After the statement of their calamities, the rulers, who, from their resemblance to those of Sodom

in guilt and doom, might be called rulers of Sodom, and the people, who, for the same reason, might be called people of Gomorrah, are warned of the worthlessness and sinfulness of their hypocritical worship, as being, in a great measure, the source of their disasters. And why should so strict, and in their opinion so praiseworthy, an adherence to their ancient and national ceremonies be so offensive to the Almighty? Because their religious observances had sunk into hypocritical acts, as was often proclaimed by our Lord; they were counterfeit, not real; only the green turf of the grave met the eye, but beneath all was uncleanness. They had put the sinews and the flesh upon the dry bones, but that made the matter worse than when there was no life, as the corpse is more offensive than the skeleton; they were the dead dressed up in the habiliments of the living—a spectacle which could not fail to excite disappointment and disgust. The very “prayers of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord.” In reference to that hypocrisy which appears to have been a national characteristic, the Almighty is represented as exclaiming—“To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me?” The passage possesses peculiar emphasis when viewed in connexion with the national rejection of the gospel by the Jewish nation since the days of Christ. They have laid their own offerings upon the altar of God, instead of presenting the offering of that Son whom he so loved. Hence the remonstrance, “To what purpose is the *multitude* of your sacrifices unto me? I value only the *one* sacrifice. I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts. I have had enough of these. I regard now only the offering of the body of the Lord Jesus once for all. I delight not in the blood of bullocks. I delight only in the blood of the cross.”

12. *When ye come to appear (or, to be seen) before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?*

To appear before God with the name without the

reality of worship was what he did not require of Israel, and had not asked. The expression "to tread the courts" of the temple, or the spaces around the temple, where the people assembled, the priests alone entering within the temple, is usually equivalent with "to worship."

13, 14. *Bring no more vain oblations ; incense is an abomination unto me ; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with : it is iniquity, (or, grief,) even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth : they are a trouble unto me ; I am weary to bear them.*

Oblations, or offerings, incense, the observance of new moons and sabbaths, and such like, by a nation who presented the shadow, while they withheld the substance, could not fail to be profitless to themselves, and valueless in the eyes of God. The new moons, or the beginnings of the months, were commemorated by particular sacrifices, Numb. xxviii. 11 ; and by blowing of trumpets over the ordinary daily sacrifices, Numb. x. 10. "I cannot away with," that is, bear or endure.

15. *And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you ; yea, when ye make many prayers, (or, multiply prayer,) I will not hear : your hands are full of blood : (or, bloods.)*

It is not to be wondered at, that in the circumstances described, the ear of the Almighty should be shut against the nation. Going to him hypocritically, the issue is what might be expected,—“When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you.” “To spread forth the hands” is an act expressive of supplication.

16-20. *Wash you, make you clean ; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes ; cease to do evil ; learn to do well ; seek judgment ; relieve (or, righten) the oppressed ; judge the fatherless ; plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord : though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land : but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword : for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.*



While the general character of the Jewish nation has been for many ages what is described above, it has not been without many invitations to them, on the part of God, to return from their evil ways. Accordingly, this feature of the divine procedure stands out prominently in the prophetic vision. The remonstrance, "Wash you, make you clean," has been addressed to them in all periods of their history—by their own prophets, by Christ, by his apostles, by those oracles of God which were committed to them, and which have always been in their hands. The invitation directs them to the keeping of that covenant which they had broken, to the necessity of separation from sin, and submission to the law of God. This is the point brought forward most fully and conspicuously in these verses, in terms of the covenant between God and Israel, as recorded in Deut. xxviii., and elsewhere. The substance of that covenant is repeated in chap. xxx. 1,—“It shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee”—the period of their history which they have long since reached, and which is still unexpired—“and shalt return unto the Lord thy God.... Then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee.” It is the same promise, in reference to the same period, which is introduced in the text. In fulfilment of the covenant made with Israel in the days of Moses, as soon as they return to the Lord, their sin, however extreme, will be blotted out. The allusion here is to the art of dyeing. As completely as the original hue of any article is removed when it is dyed, is the guilt of sin removed by the blood of Christ—the blood of the covenant by which the sin of Israel is to be purged away, Zech. ix.

11. Similar expressions indicative of the completeness of the forgiveness by God of sin, when confessed and renounced, are, the casting it into the depths of the sea, behind the back, not remembering it, and so forth. It is of the sin of the seed of Abraham that it is said, "The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found," Jer. l. 20. The covenant with Israel included, among other blessings, the possession of Canaan. "If any of thine be driven out unto the utmost parts of heaven, from thence will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee; and the Lord thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and they shall possess it," Deut. xxx. 4, 5. This particular is also introduced in the vision of the prophet (19, 20). If willing and obedient, they should eat of the fruit of the land. But this they were not. They refused and rebelled, even when the Son of God pleaded with them on earth. When he would have gathered them under his wing, they would not; when he urged them to go to him that they might have life, they refused, and therefore the Roman sword devoured them. On their becoming willing and obedient depends the question of their recovery. The covenant with Israel was no resuscitation of the covenant of works. To believe, to repent, as well as to love and trust—other parts of the obedience of the heart—are included among the commandments upon submission to which the prosperity of the nation depends. Once they were urged to a prospective, now to a retrospective faith. Once to a Saviour who was to appear, now to a Saviour who has appeared. The obedience of faith is not merely obedience which faith produces, but obedience which includes faith. And this obedience is the pivot on which the restoration as well as the conversion of Israel turns.

21-23. *How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers. Thy silver*

*is become dross, thy wine mixed with water : thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves : every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards : they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.*

It has been characteristic of the nation that they have spurned the divine offers ; and hence, in the following verses, their rebellion is represented as being continued. The voice of lamentation again resounds in the ears of the prophet. "How is the faithful city become an harlot !" Once had Jerusalem been to God as the faithful spouse, but for how long has she transferred her affections and allegiance to other lords. The crime introduced in this figure is the most odious in the eyes of men, and it is selected on many occasions to show the infamy of Judah's ways, the injury done by her to God, and his indignation against her sin. What more appropriate than the language of lamentation in such a case. How mournful, that there should have been separation from such a husband, on the part of a spouse so honoured and blessed. The city which was once full of judgment<sup>1</sup> (justice), and where righteousness had lodged—where it had a home, has been the abode of murderers. From the contrast, the expression may signify that it had become the seat of injustice and unrighteousness. So utterly have justice and righteousness often been disregarded by the Jews, that they may well be called the murderers of these virtues. How completely had they fled from a city in which false witnesses were sought so diligently to accuse the Saviour, in which rulers and people united in seeking the blood of that just person. But literally, by such acts as the crucifixion of Christ, and the butchery of Stephen, and their mutual slaughter of each other before the destruction of their city by Titus, it merited the ignominious

<sup>1</sup> Judgment—מִשְׁפָּט. This word bears a great variety of significations. It means properly judgment, the act of judging, Job ix. 32. Hence, among other meanings, justice, righteousness—a signification which, as here, it bears very frequently.

title of being the home and haunt of murderers. Our Lord himself, and his apostles, confirmed the truth of the prophetic description—"It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem." "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee." "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One."

"Thy silver" (22), that is, what was once valuable as silver, had become dross. What was pleasant as wine had become polluted. Up to the very fountainhead had the stream of justice been corrupted, for against the rulers is the charge especially brought (23),—"Thy princes are rebellious." Their conduct is very frequently made the subject of reprobation. "The leaders of this people cause them to err," ix. 16. "Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees . . . that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless," x. 1, 2. The truth of the picture here drawn is fully corroborated by the language of our Saviour regarding the Jews of his day. His charges are directed most of all against the Scribes and Pharisees, and other leaders of the nation; these devoured widows' houses.

24-31. *Therefore saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies: And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge (or, according to pureness) away thy dross, and take away all thy tin: and I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city. Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts (or, they that return of her) with righteousness. And the destruction (or, breaking) of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the Lord shall be consumed. For they shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen. For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water. And the strong shall be as tow, and the maker of it (or, his work) as a spark, and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench them.*



The vision closes with the assurance that Judah will ultimately be the object of God's peculiar favour, as at the beginning. The fact that it thus stretches into a period yet future—for the particulars of the prophecy have not been fulfilled in any past restoration of the nation—confirms the view that the preceding description is taken from a survey of the general sinfulness of Judah in all ages, and is not to be limited to their condition under any particular reign. Their final deliverance will be of a character to indicate God's displeasure against their sin. At a certain period in their history, He who is represented as being weary with bearing the iniquities of Judah, xliii. 24, will cast off this burden—will ease Him of His adversaries, and will by correction put an end to their sin. He will employ judgments even more terrible than any that have gone before—judgments which will prove as effectual in separating between them and their sin, as is the fire in separating between the dross and the silver<sup>1</sup> (25). So similarly, in reference to a period still future—"I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried;" and the effect of this will be, "they shall call on my name, and I will hear them. I will say, it is my people; and they shall say, the Lord is my God," Zech. xiii. 9. So it is said to be by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning, that the Lord is at last to wash away the filth of the daughters of Zion, iv. 4. It is said, that he is to gather Israel out of the countries wherein they are scattered, to plead with them face to face—to cause them to pass under the rod; and in this way to purge out from among them the rebels, so that they shall know that he is the Lord, Ezek. xx. 33-38. In still closer conformity with the text, it is written,

<sup>1</sup> Tin, from כֶּרֶל, to divide, signifies the worthless part of the ore which is separated in the furnace from the metal. The phrase, "turn my hand," here denotes violence, as in Amos i. 8.

“Because ye are all become dross, behold, I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. As they gather silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and tin into the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof,” Ezek. xxii. 19-22. These, and many similar texts, foretell that Israel is yet to be the object of greater but purifying judgments, and that of these their own land is to be the scene. This implies their national restoration, and their restoration unconverted. That they will return to Judea unbelievers in the Messiah, is often made quite evident; for example, in the 2d chapter of Zechariah. It is taught there, that it will be against the Jews assembled in Jerusalem that all nations will be gathered, that it is there that the Lord will defend them. Then their unbelief will be taken away—the Spirit will be poured out upon them, and that which has hitherto been to them a fountain sealed, will be to them a fountain opened. Then the rulers of Israel who have been conspicuous in guilt will again be all righteous. God will restore to her judges as in the days of her greatest prosperity; and Jerusalem, the city which has become an harlot, will be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city. Zion shall be redeemed<sup>1</sup> with judgment (justice), and her converts (those who return of her, margin), that is, who return out of the nations among whom she has been scattered, with righteousness. The expressions justice and righteousness refer to the character of God’s proceedings, not to the character of the Jews. Terrible as the calamities inflicted upon them are described to be, yet they will be as just and righteous as they will be terrible. The judge of all the earth, in this as in every other instance, shall do right. It is of his final judgments on the nations of the earth at last that it is said, “with righteousness shall he judge the world,” Ps. xeviii. 9. “With righteousness shall he

<sup>1</sup> This verb signifies not only to ransom, to deliver, by the payment of a price, but, as here, to deliver in any way, as in Job v. 20; 1 Kings i. 29.

judge the poor. Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins," Isaiah xi. 4, 5. "His righteousness it sustained him. For he put on righteousness as a breastplate," Isaiah lix. 16, 17. "In righteousness he doth judge and make war," Rev. xix. 11. The circumstance of Zion's deliverance will be righteous, as being the accomplishment of promises secured to her by covenant; as being brought about by judgments which her sins have merited; and as being marked by deserved recompense inflicted on her guilty oppressors. This verse, and also the 28th, may have reference to the judgments of Gentiles as well as Jews, in the day when the Lord shall plead with all flesh. The expressions destruction, or breaking, crushing, and consumed, or burnt up, so that nothing is left, point out the effectual removal of the wicked both from among Jews and Gentiles, when all Israel shall be saved. By means of their great trials, a change will be produced at last on the character of the Jewish nation. Shame and confusion will cover them for the sins perpetrated in the groves of oaks and in the gardens, which have formed the chief scenes of their idolatries and impurities.<sup>1</sup> The one form of sin introduced, the grossest, perhaps, as is well known, which existed among idolatrous nations, from which even Israel was not exempt, appears to represent their general depravity. On account of that, and the other sins, of which this is a specimen, it was predicted that the nation would be blighted as the leafless oak,<sup>2</sup> or as the unwatered garden, and its strength consumed as tow when kindled by the fire.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> There is in the first clause of the verse, what is very common in Isaiah, according to what appears an idiom in Hebrew poetry, a change from the second to the third person plural. Similar examples of a change in person are very common in the prophets, and this license of Hebrew poetry has constantly to be borne in mind.

<sup>2</sup> It is generally supposed that by the oak is meant the terebinth or turpentine tree.

<sup>3</sup> The maker of it, עֲשֵׂה. The regular form of the present participle Kal, used, however, apparently for עֹשֶׂה, his work.

## CHAPTER II.

THE vision, of which this chapter is the commencement, may be regarded as extending to the close of the fifth chapter. It opens with an enlarged description of the concluding subjects of the previous vision. Verses 1-5, foretell the restoration of Israel to the place she held at first in the favour of God, with the effect produced upon the world at large by the spectacle of the great things done for her. Verses 6-9, point out the cause of the calamities which have overwhelmed her; and verses 10-22, describe the doings of the great and terrible day of the Lord, by which the sin and the suffering of Israel and of the world will be purged away.

1. *The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.*

This verse limits the subject as before to Judah and Jerusalem, and excludes therefore the Church from being the subject of the prophecy, which, however, extends to the period when the Church shall embrace all flesh. See i. 1.

2, 3. *And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established (or, prepared) in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.*

The period of the event predicted here is in the last



days, literally, in the latter end of days ; days, not years, being often employed in Scripture to measure, not only the duration of human existence, but also of the present system of things. It is a very wide expression, and therefore is not necessarily to be limited to the days of the Messiah at the time of his appearing in the form of flesh—here it refers to events not yet accomplished. It is predicted that the mountain of the Lord's house, called Zion in parallel passages, that is, Jerusalem, which is the term used in the close of the verse, shall have given it a prominence and name which shall attract all nations to it.

This is figuratively represented by describing it as elevated to the top of a range of mountains. The temple is now gone—its site is sheltered from the grosser abominations of the Pagan, by the mosque of the Mahometan ; but the mountain remains, and it seems foretold that it shall yet again be the hill on which God shall desire to dwell. In other instances also, Mount Zion is represented as the scene of events yet to be accomplished in Jerusalem. “ In this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things. He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people. In this mountain shall the hand of the Lord rest,” xxv. 6, 7, 9. “ Thus saith the Lord, I am returned unto Zion, and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth, and the mountain of the Lord of Hosts the holy mountain,” Zech. viii. 3. In this last passage, Mount Zion and Jerusalem are clearly equivalent expressions. The import of the passage appears to be, explaining it by the last part of verse 3, that Jerusalem will be, in an extraordinary manner, the seat of the Divine presence and worship, and the source of spiritual blessings to man. It is added, that the events then transacted at Jerusalem, will be of such a character as will excite the interest, and draw the attention of the whole Gentile world. The honouring of Israel again by God, in connexion with the manifestation

of his own glory, would evidently be a circumstance fitted to break that yoke of unbelief by which the world is bound, and to recommend the knowledge and service of the God of Jacob. Referring to the same period, it is written—"In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people, to it shall the Gentiles seek," xi. 10. "The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising," lx. 3. "It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities; and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily and pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord," Zech. viii. 20-22. It will not be the first time that many people will have said, Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord. What a flowing to Judea was there in the times of the Crusades. In these, six millions are computed to have perished. And with the facilities for travelling that now exist, and with Christian zeal, not superstitious fanaticism, the motive, how easy is it to conceive all nations again flowing to the mountain of the Lord's house.

"For out of Zion." This clause indicates that from Jerusalem, as a centre, the knowledge of the true God is at last to emanate, until it spread over the whole earth. So bright will be the light that will appear then, when the Lord shall build up Zion, and appear in his glory, that it will diffuse itself among all nations, both Jew and Gentile. At first, when the light shone in darkness, the darkness comprehended it not; but it will not fail a second time. When the Sun of righteousness, who has only yet dawned, shall rise upon the world, the darkness will be made to comprehend the light.

*4. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into plough-shares, and their*

*spears into pruning-hooks, (or, scythes :) nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.*

There is now the prediction of those terrible national judgments which are to precede the conversion of the world to Christ, and of the peace which, by means of them, will be introduced on earth. The judgments foretold in the latter part of the former chapter are chiefly those of the Jewish nation ; here, however, the world at large is represented as being involved in them. If Scripture is to be taken in its natural signification, no prophecies were ever more explicit than those which foretell a period of great national trouble previous to the establishment of the kingdom of righteousness on the earth. In the world's past history, war has generally been the forerunner of peace—the duration of the one has generally been in proportion to the severity of the other, so that although, at the first glance, it looks an unnatural connexion, it is quite in the order of things that universal and permanent peace should follow in the track of universal and terrible war. The allusions to the day of national judgments as the precursor of universal righteousness, are too numerous either for quotation or reference. The following are only specimens of a large class:—"He (Christ) shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked." And after that—"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain," xi. 4-9. "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth." And then, after judgment, peace. "He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth ; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder ; he burneth the chariot in the fire," Ps. xlv. 8, 9. "He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment." And then it follows—"The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little

hills by righteousness," Ps. lxxii. 2, 3. "Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles, prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: beat your plough-shares into swords, and your pruning-hooks into spears." And after that—"Then shall Jerusalem be holy....the mountains shall drop down new wine," Joel iii. 9-18. The peace portrayed in the text will be that of Eden in the beginning, when no instruments were needed but those to dress the ground, and to keep it. For swords and spears there shall be plough-shares and pruning-hooks. "In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig-tree," Zech. iii. 10.

*5. O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord.*

Yielding to the impulse excited in his breast by the blissful spectacle of millennial peace which appeared to the prophetic vision of Isaiah, springing up in the far future, he bursts forth into this appeal to Israel, to secure that peace now by walking in the light of the Lord.

*6-9. Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people the house of Jacob, because they be replenished from (or, more than) the east, and are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they please themselves in (or, abound with) the children of strangers. Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures; their land is also full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots: their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made: and the mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himself: therefore forgive them not.*

The prophet having contemplated the happy condition of this earth when all subjected again to the sceptre of righteousness, and having given vent to the feelings in behalf of his own people which it excited, has his view directed to a less pleasing portion of the prophetic field. The vision passes from the future condition of mankind to the state of Israel's desolation: "Thou hast forsaken thy people." And the cause of it, their sin—"Because



they be replenished from the east," &c. The description of their sin is not to be understood of their national character in the prophet's days, or at any one period of their history. It is introduced as rising up on the prophetic field, and presenting itself to the eye of Isaiah as a horrible evil, and the cause of their approaching abandonment by God. The class of vices which is here adverted to, is that which arose from the Jews conforming themselves to the manners of the idolatrous nations among whom they may have dwelt—a danger against which, although specially warned, they did not guard, but rather seemed to court. It embraces the charges of general conformity to the customs of the Persians and other Eastern nations—the practice of soothsaying or counterfeit prophesying—alliance with strangers—the accumulation of wealth, and of horses and chariots for purposes of war—and the universal observance of idol-worship by mean and great together—sins to which their attention had been directed as most offensive to God, and from which they had been warned to keep themselves clean. This flagrant class of offences is represented as forming one express cause of judgment. In many other passages the misfortunes of Israel are traced to the same origin, for example, "They were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works, and they served their idols, which were a snare unto them; therefore was the wrath of God kindled against his people," Ps. cvi. 35-40.<sup>1</sup>

10-16. *Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up, and he shall be brought low: and upon all the*

<sup>1</sup> "Therefore forgive them not," is often rendered by commentators, Therefore thou shalt not forgive them; but this is not necessary. לֹא with the Future expresses the Imperative, which cannot be connected with the negative particle. לֹא could have referred to the Future, not לֹא.

*cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan, and upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up, and upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, and upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures, (or, pictures of desire.)*

The remedy which God will apply for the sin of the nations of the earth is foretold in the remainder of the chapter, which gives one of the most vivid descriptions contained in Scripture of the final judgments of the Lord upon men, in connexion with the establishment of his kingdom on earth. There is here a detailed account of what is shortly intimated in the first clause of verse 4. The subject is one which Scripture fully establishes in other passages, and as it alone can throw light upon the subject, little more can be done than point out the kindred passages in which it is introduced. Scripture often refers to a season of judgment, to which no events in the world's history hitherto answer, which shall be universal, terrible, connected with the restoration to their country and their God of his ancient people, and preparatory to the conversion of the whole world to the truth. "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? . . . I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury. For the day of vengeance is in my heart," lxiii. 1-4. "By fire and by his sword shall the Lord plead with all flesh, and the slain of the Lord shall be many," lxvi. 16. "The Lord shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries," Ps. cx. 5, 6. "Behold, in those days, I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem. I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people, and for my heritage Israel," Joel iii.

1, 25. "Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not from the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved," Matt. xxiv. 21, 22. That these passages refer to a period yet future is evident from the context, as in the last quotation, where it is added, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light; and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven." In the book of Revelation, we find a passage whose similarity to this in Isaiah is easily identified—"I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the kings of the earth, and the great men, said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" Rev. vi. 12-17. In the same book, before the description of his reign on earth, we have Christ revealed in this character—"I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse, and he that sat on him was called faithful and true, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war," Rev. xix. 11. Such are but a few specimens of the way in which Scripture speaks of a day of trouble, whose like the world hath not yet seen—they corroborate each other in the most conclusive way; and it is to the events which they together describe that this part of Isaiah's vision refers. It is evidently not to be expected that every particular in this account should be free from obscurity—it is not necessary that unfulfilled prediction should be so—but the fact itself appears to be unquestionable. From the description given by Isaiah, we learn that it will be a time of general judgment (11, 12). The lofty looks of man, not of the Jews merely, but of all, will be humbled—"the day of the Lord will be upon all the high mountains, upon every fenced tower." And in parallel passages it is written, "that

with his sharp sword Christ shall smite the nations"—“he shall wound the head over many countries”—“the Lord shall plead with all flesh.” We learn further, that the servants of Christ shall be safe from these calamities: “The day of the Lord shall be upon every one who is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up”—these only shall be brought low. So similarly, “for the elect’s sake, these days shall be shortened.” “Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For behold the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity.” “The heavens and the earth shall shake, but the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.” We learn also, that the cause of these judgments will be the proud opposition of men to God. He is represented throughout the passage as engaged in putting down men who are as it were claiming equality with himself—who are conducting themselves as if seeking to usurp his prerogatives, and stand in the place of God—who cherish the old desire of being as gods, which provoked the Almighty to take unto him his great power, and expel angels from Heaven and man from Eden. His judgments are directed against lofty looks and haughtiness—against the proud and lofty, and lifted up. In keeping with this, it is the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, &c., who are said to call at last on the hills to cover them. It is the kings of the earth who shall set themselves, and the rulers who shall take counsel against the Lord. It is through kings that he will strike in the day of his wrath. We learn further, that nature itself will be a sharer in these woes (13, 14). Lebanon, celebrated for its cedars, and Bashan for its oaks, high mountains, and hills, are enumerated as feeling the effects of the day of the Lord’s vengeance. So



similarly, "Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars. Howl, fir-tree ; for the cedar is fallen ; because the mighty are spoiled : howl, O ye oaks of Bashan ; for the forest of the vintage is come down," Zech. xi. 1, 2. Convulsions of nature, on earth as well as in heaven, are often named among the accompanying phenomena of that day when "the Lord shall judge among the nations." "The heavens and the earth shall shake," Joel iii. 16. All defences, whether on sea or land, are said to be involved in the general catastrophe (15, 16). That day is called "the day of great slaughter, when the towers fall," (xxx. 25). In connexion with the same period, it is written, "Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind," Psalm xlviii. 7. And among those who are said to come up at last against Israel to take a spoil, and to take a prey, are the merchants of Tarshish, Ezek. xxxviii. 13. What city or country is denoted by Tarshish is not known : it is generally understood to mean Tarsessus, in Spain. The name, in almost every instance, occurs in connexion with ships, so that it is to be regarded as representing a maritime country, or naval power. In Isaiah lx. 9, which see, it does so manifestly. It may here be regarded as teaching, that the naval bulwarks of kingdoms, as well as their land fortifications, will be no defence from the manifestations of divine vengeance against the guilty nations of the world in the day of the Lord's anger.—The expression, "upon all pleasant pictures," is understood variously. Lowth translates, "against every work of art." Barnes, "against every sight of desire," that is, every beautiful object. Every production of art, or whatever is beautiful to the eye, will share the common fate. The vanity of every object of human pride and confidence will be made manifest.

17. *And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be laid low : and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.*

This verse is just a repetition of 10-12, indicating how prominent a feature in the final judgments of the Lord upon the earth will be the humiliation of the pride of man. Now, in the long *year* of merciful visitation, the contest is between the pride of man, and the grace, the love, the long-suffering of God; but in the short *day* of vengeance, it will be between the pride of man and the power of God; and although under the former, the world at large continues stout-hearted, under the latter, the arrogance of man will speedily cease. The issue of the struggle is soon determined; the loftiness of man is bowed down, the Lord alone is exalted.

18. *And the idols he shall utterly abolish* (or, *shall utterly pass away*).

The reference here is to the idolatry of the world at large. The context refers to man generally. Idolatry was a principal cause (verse 8) of judgment overtaking Israel, but it cannot now be said to be characteristic of that nation, (unless the term be taken in its figurative sense, and then it is true that they have their idols of silver and their idols of gold); and there is no reason to suppose that they will, as of old, be again, as a nation, idolaters. The verse indicates that idol-worship, the most prominent form of antagonism to the worship of God, will be for ever put down in the season of national judgments. It implies also, that it will not be put down till then. This seems to be the utterance of Scripture in other places (see xxv. 7). How unfounded, according to such a passage, is the popular opinion, that the Christian Church is gradually, and in the ordinary course, to extend itself until it have covered the world with its shade. It has now had a fair trial of eighteen hundred years, and the prospect of the world's evangelization through its instrumentality is as distant as ever. Sin in its grossest form of idol-worship still holds its sway over a large proportion of the earth; and it is here foretold that it is not until

the day of the Lord's vengeance that it shall be abolished.

19. *And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth (or, dust), for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.*

This description, and the parallel descriptions, as that in Rev. vi. 15-17, have not met their fulfilment in any past events, and it is as manifest that they will not meet their fulfilment in the judgment of the risen dead. It is not hinted that on that day they will make the vain attempt to escape the fate they have provoked. Paralyzed and speechless, whatever their boastings now, they shall *go away*, when their doom, "Depart from me, ye cursed," is announced, although they go forward to the fiery lake. But although not applicable to that event, the language of the verse—the looking for escape to rocks and caves, is quite in keeping with what is foretold of the great and terrible day of national judgments, when the Lord shall shake terribly the earth. The terrors of men are represented by their taking refuge in holes and caves. Such places are in the East the common haunts of robbers and abandoned characters, and to say of men that they flee to that quarter betokens the utmost consternation. It is the day of which it is said, "Who shall be able to stand?"

20, 21. *In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver (or, the idols of his silver), and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself (or, for him) to worship, to the moles and to the bats; to go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.*

These verses form a parallelism in signification and almost in language with the two preceding. The moles and bats inhabit, the one, the earth; the other, ruins, secret, dark places. To throw valuable idols into such parts, indicates the loss of all confidence in them or regard for them—another image of a season of dismay, when the

idolater will throw away objects which he prizes from their intrinsic value, and still more from superstitious attachments, and will cast into such places what he was wont to associate with his most hallowed feelings—what was the object of his worship, and the symbol of his protection.

22. *Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils ; for wherein is he to be accounted of ?*

How apposite this exclamation of the prophet over such a scene ! in which the lofty and haughty will be bowed down, seeking safety in caves, and casting their idols of silver and gold into holes ; and in which God will visit the nations of the earth with such judgments that the blood of the carnage is said to reach to the horses' bridles. It is in connexion with the same event that the cry is raised—"All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field," xl. 6.

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### CHAPTER III.

THIS chapter is occupied with predictions of the degradation to which the Jews would be subjected, interspersed with allusions to the cause of these, viz., their grievous sins. The vision passes from the contemplation of the general judgments with which the establishment of Christ's kingdom on earth will be introduced, to describe those which would be inflicted on the Jewish nation in particular. The awful prospect before the eye of the prophet naturally suggested the exclamation—"Cease ye from man." The case of Israel, which is next brought forward, furnishes fresh illustration of his vanity.

1. *For, behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water.*



The prophet, looking forward from the point where he stood, foretells first the utter desolation of the land of Judea. And how literally have this and the subsequent prophecies been accomplished! The country which, in the days of its prosperity, supported a population so numerous that the infidel has denied the possibility of it, has been made waste; the immense tracts of that land which once flowed with milk and honey, have been long utterly barren—both its bread and its water have been taken away. Of the country at large, it has been said by an eye-witness, “a tract from which a hundred individuals draw a scanty subsistence, formerly maintained thousands.” Similarly, it is foretold, “I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem: and they shall eat bread by weight, and with care; and they shall drink water by measure, and with astonishment,” Ezek. iv. 16. “I will stretch forth mine hand upon the land, and will break the staff of the bread thereof, and will send famine upon it,” Ezek. xiv. 13.

2, 3. *The mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient, the captain of fifty, and the honourable man (or, a man eminent in countenance), and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator (or, skilful of speech).*

Not merely on one point, but on each, does the prophecy threaten them, and has the curse smitten them. That nation, which, while it walked in the ways of the Lord, was, more than any other, a nation of mighty men in counsel and in war, and in every other position, is now stripped of them all, and has become the only people on earth without its warriors, and judges, and rulers. Where, during the last 1800 years especially of *its* history, have been its mighty men in the cabinet or in the field? They have been taken away from the people as literally as the bread and the water have been taken away from the barren and parched land. A recent letter from Beyrout, quoted in the newspapers, of date the 31st August, states that the

Jews of Damascus, in order to testify their gratitude to Sir Moses Montefiore for several acts of benevolence, have bestowed on him the title of Nassi (Prince) of the Israelites of Damascus. In this case, the exception strengthens the rule. The existence of a solitary honourable title in the nation, illustrates strikingly how completely the honourable man has been taken away.

4. *And I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them.*

So extreme has been the degradation of the people that instead of such rulers as Moses, and David, and Solomon—men who have never had their parallel in other nations, babes may be said to have ruled over them. They have been the plaything and laughing-stock even of children, wherever they have been scattered, without any power of redress from their insults. “The veriest Turkish urchin who may encounter one of the fallen nation on his path, has his mite of insult to add to the degradation of the outcast and wandering race of Israel; nor dares the oppressed party revenge himself even upon this puny enemy, whom his very name suffices to raise up against him.”<sup>1</sup>

5. *And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbour; the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honourable.*

Their whole history, for upwards of 2000 years, has been an illustration of the fact, that they have been oppressed. It has been everywhere a succession of oppressions, not only at the hands of others, but of themselves. And, themselves the objects of common contempt, they have naturally lost respect for each other, even the young for the aged, and the base for the honourable. How utterly were all ties, even those of relationship, burst in the instance of the last siege of Jerusalem, and every one oppressed by his neighbour. “They shall eat every one

<sup>1</sup> City of the Sultan, vol. ii. p. 362.

the flesh of his own arm ; Manasseh, Ephraim, and Ephraim, Manasseh," ix. 20, 21 ; Jer. ix. 4, 5 ; Zech. vii. 9-11. It has long been with the nation as it was in the days of Jeremiah during the captivity in Babylon, when Israel had ceased to be a kingdom—"The faces of elders were not honoured . . . the elders have ceased from the gate . . . the crown is fallen from our head," Lam. v. 12-16.

6, 7. *When a man shall take hold of his brother, of the house of his father, saying, Thou hast clothing, be thou our ruler, and let this ruin be under thy hand ; in that day shall he swear (or, lift up the hand), saying, I will not be an healer (or, binder up) ; for in my house is neither bread nor clothing : make me not a ruler of the people.*

To so hopeless a condition, even in their own eyes, are they described as being reduced, that every feeling of ambition is said to be laid prostrate in the breasts of those who were once the most ambitious of all people, so that when the man who has clothing is invited to be ruler, his answer is, "I have neither bread nor clothing, make me not a ruler of the people." Universally, men are found aspiring after civic honours ; these do not require to be forced upon them ; they are courted : but in the case of Israel, it is foretold that they would be pressed upon them, and that, too, by relatives, but in vain. And where, for many ages, would have been the honour of being a ruler among the Jews ? Such a position would only have made one obnoxious to fresh insult, and larger extortion. It is well known how common a case it has been in their history, for the wealthy among them to counterfeit poverty, in order to escape the exactions of their oppressors. And the same reason which has led them to pretend poverty, would lead them to shun every honourable office. How low has a nation sunk when in it there is scarcely an office to occupy, and none willing to occupy such as there are. How truly might it be said of a people so degraded—"Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen."—The expression, "thou hast clothing," implies wealth on the part of the individual ; many

changes of raiment being one of the common shapes into which riches were converted, and in which they were accumulated.

8, 9. *For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen; because their tongue and their doings are against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of his glory. The shew of their countenance doth witness against them; and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not: woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves.*

In the vision of the prophet, the sins of the nation appear always side by side with their judgments; and in these verses he returns to those which were the fruitful spring of all their evils. Not only had their doings been against the Lord, but also their tongue, that is, their language. So, similarly, it is said, "Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord; ye have said, it is vain to serve God, and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinances?" Mal. iii. 14. How often and how bitterly were their tongues against him on earth, when their language was, Away with him from the earth; crucify him: Hail! King of the Jews. And since then to the present hour, they have never ceased to assail and malign the Son of the Highest as an impostor—the basest of all characters.—The expression, "to provoke the eyes of his glory," signifies, to provoke his indignation. The eye very quickly expresses anger; its flash is very indicative of indignation, when strongly incited in the breast by any injury.—The wicked are in many cases betrayed by their looks. An ordinary degree of vice is not manifested in this way; but when the "shew of the countenance" expresses it, it is implied that it exists in a very aggravated degree. Such has been the case with Judah. It doubtless often appeared in the expression of the face, as well as in the language of the tongue and the doings of the hand, in their treatment of Christ, as it did in their treatment of Stephen, when they gnashed on him with their teeth. So it is written, "Thou hadst a whore's forehead; thou refusedst



to be ashamed," Jer. iii. 3. "They were not at all ashamed; neither could they blush," Jer. vi. 15.

A farther aggravation of their sin is said to be, that, like that of Sodom, whose cry waxed great before the face of the Lord, it was undisguised. So it has been. Their treatment of the Saviour, and their continued rejection of him, have been done before the face of day, without even an attempt at concealment or palliation.

10, 11. *Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given (or, done to) him.*

Invitations to repentance, as in many other instances, are here interspersed in the vision, as has been done in their history, with the judgments and sins of Judah. The threatenings and the mercies of God have never ceased to be sounded in their ears. In every way in which the Almighty could address them, has he persevered in lifting up his voice, saying unto the righteous, it shall be well with him; and woe unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him. At sundry times, and in divers manners, did he speak to them by the prophets; after that, by his Son and his apostles; by the writings of Moses and their own prophets, to the present day; and still more loudly in all ages by the voice of his Providence.

12. *As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, they which lead thee (or, call thee blessed) cause thee to err, and destroy (or, swallow up) the way of thy paths.*

Again the vision returns to the judgments of the nation. Not only have they been made the sport of children, (see verse 4,) but even of women, who, in heathen countries, are the sport of all others. The degradation of females in such lands is well known. They are subjected to the most oppressive drudgery, like beasts of burden; but even they who themselves are ruled over, may, with impunity, rule over the Jewish race. To the insults and injuries of

women no less than of children, might Jews, in some countries to the present hour, be exposed without redress. Another of the curses with which they are threatened is the infliction of evil rulers. How fully was it fulfilled in the days of our Lord. With what severity does he speak of this class when he was on earth. "Wo unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men ; for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Ye devour widows' houses ; ye make the proselyte twofold more the child of hell than yourselves," Matt. xxiii.—"They which lead thee," or, as in the margin, they which call thee blessed, or bless thee, (a description equally applicable as the other to the Jewish rulers, in whose persons the civil and the sacred were so often combined,) "cause thee to err." How great curses to the nation were many of their rulers prior to the time of Christ, and subsequently, as during the Roman siege, how much were they the means of aggravating the miseries of the nation.

13-15. *The Lord standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the people. The Lord will enter into judgment with the ancients of his people, and the princes thereof : for ye have eaten (or, burnt) up the vineyard ; the spoil of the poor is in your houses. What mean ye that ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor ? saith the Lord God of hosts.*

In these verses, the Lord is represented as moved with indignation at the oppressions to which his people are subjected at the hands of their rulers. He espouses their cause. He remonstrates sharply against the treatment they experienced, and foretells a day of retribution. The sin and judgment of the rulers of the nation are often declared. "The Lord looked for judgment (justice), but behold oppression ; for righteousness, but behold a cry," v. 7. "They judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, the right of the needy do they not judge. Shall I not visit for these things ? saith the Lord ; shall not my

soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" Jer. v. 28, 29. "Ye devour widows' houses," said the Saviour to them when on earth, "therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation." "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" This prediction of Isaiah may be regarded as receiving its accomplishment in the extinction for many ages of the ancients or elders and princes of the nation. It still exists, but it has been long a people without rulers or princes of its own.

16. *Moreover, the Lord saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton (or, deceiving with their) eyes, walking and mincing (or, tripping nicely) as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet.*

Heavy as the curse of corrupt rulers is to a nation, it was not the only one which would press upon Judah, the corruption of their women, the daughters of Zion, would be equally extreme; and as the depravity of the former is a sure index of the low ebb of morality in a nation, and of its ripeness for judgment, so is the latter. The character of the female part of a population is a familiar and undoubted test of its morality, and is therefore with much propriety introduced in the vision of the prophet. Where the fountainhead is corrupt, the stream will be so also. Perhaps this particular, like the former, is not noticed on account of its being more prominent than in the case of other ungodly nations, but rather as a sign of the condition of the nation at large. The charge is one of lewdness and vanity. In numerous other passages is the sin of the daughters of Zion pointed to. There are references to the "filth of the daughters of Zion," iv. 4; to the "women that are at ease;" to "careless daughters," xxxii. 9.—"Mincing as they go," or tripping nicely, (margin), denotes walking with an air of affectation—a thing more common in the East, but well enough known everywhere. Making a tinkling with the feet refers to the noise made

by the rings or other ornaments worn on the ankles in the East.

17-24. *Therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the Lord will discover (or, make naked) their secret parts. In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their cauls (or, net-works), and their round tires like the moon, the chains (or, sweet balls), and the bracelets, and the mufflers (or, spangled ornaments), the bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets (or, houses of the soul), and the earrings, the rings, and nose jewels, the changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping pins, the glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the vails. And it shall come to pass, that instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle a rent; and instead of well-set hair baldness; and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth; and burning instead of beauty.*

These verses detail the curse which the lewdness and vanity of the Jewish females would provoke. Not only would the ornaments of which they were most proud, and the articles of dress which were most necessary for their comfort, be taken away; but also the evils which the vain woman most dreads, would be visited on them in the worst degree (24). It is of little consequence to ascertain precisely the identity of each of the ornaments enumerated in this list, which contains so full and so ancient a description of the articles of female dress. At all events, they have been long taken away; the command, "Strip you, make you bare," has been obeyed; the spectacle of the gaiety and haughtiness of the daughters of Zion has been changed into one of sadness, and humiliation, and poverty. The prophecy embraces the whole era of their degradation, beginning at the captivity in Babylon, completed by their subjection and captivity by the Romans, and continued by their dispersion over the whole earth. Their own removal from Judea, many of them into lands where their national usages did not exist, required the putting away of the characteristic ornaments of the East; and by the violence of their oppressors have their valu-



able decorations been more literally taken away. Like the rest of the nation, they have not only been scattered, but peeled. Well might the Saviour, with such a prediction as this to be fulfilled regarding them, exclaim—"Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves." So lengthened a detail of articles of dress and ornaments implies that the love of them was a characteristic of the female character among the Jews; and it is well known that this is the case still. The finest jewels in the world are in the possession of that race. At a ball at the Rothschilds', some years ago, it was remarked, in the periodicals of the day, that the company presented a display of jewelry that had never been seen equalled in any assembly in Britain.

*25. Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty (or, might) in the war.*

But not even would the removal of their rulers and the shame and spoiling of their females fill up the cup of the nation's judgments—the men, even their mighty men, would perish. In the single case of the last siege of Jerusalem was this prediction fully verified. On that occasion alone upwards of a million perished, embracing of course a large proportion of mighty men; the orders of Titus to his soldiers being "that they should kill none but those who were in arms, and opposed them."

*26. And her gates shall lament and mourn; and she being desolate (or, cleansed, or, emptied) shall sit upon the ground.*

Universal sorrow and degradation are here predicted as awaiting the nation. The gates of a city were of old the chief places of concourse, of business, and even of judgment. The meaning is, that the crowds assembled there, instead of being engaged in the usual exciting conversation or business that passed at such spots, would meet only to mourn. The last clause has received a literal and familiar fulfilment in a Roman medal, struck to commem-

orate the triumph of Rome over the Jewish nation, which embodies the description of the prophet. It represents Judah by the figure of a woman sitting in the attitude of grief, with the inscription beneath—Judea taken. Other nations have recorded their victories and glories in the most imperishable manner, on monuments and otherwise; but the memorials of Judah are those of her enemies, and are records of her defeat and shame. The original for desolate is emptied—emptied, that is, of inhabitants.

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## CHAPTER IV.

THIS chapter takes up the subject with which the preceding closes, viz., the reduced condition of the Jewish nation; but passes immediately to the state of prosperity by which it will be succeeded, and foretells the manifestation of the divine favour in their behalf (2); the fertility of the land (2); the holiness of the people (3, 4); and their enjoyment of divine protection and blessing (5, 6).

1. *And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name (or, thy name be called upon us), to take (or, take thou) away our reproach.*

The mighty men of Judah have already fallen, but not yet to the extent indicated in this verse. The prediction is carried on to the close of the nation's trials: it foretells, so terribly will their numbers be thinned by yet coming judgments, that the proportion of the sexes will be so unequal, that there will be but one man for seven women. Other passages also seem to declare that greater judgments than any yet inflicted will fall on that people before they turn unto the Lord. (See i. 25.) In the following verses in Zech. xiii. 8, 9, the extent of these is very

clearly taught,—“It shall come to pass, that in all the land” (in the land of Judea, at a period therefore subsequent to their return in their national character and unconverted state) “two parts thereof shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and refine them as silver is refined.” The circumstance that war will form one, if not the chief or only element of that fire, accounts for the disproportion between the sexes indicated by Isaiah. This startling and significant index of terrible judgment is alluded to in other places,—“I will make a man more precious than fine gold, even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir,” xiii. 12. “I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee,” Ezek. xxxix. 2.

2. *In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious (or, beauty and glory), and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped (or, the escaping) of Israel.*

The first verse of the chapter is connected with, and should not be separated from the close of the preceding one. The remaining verses describe the blessedness of Judah and Israel after their judgments are over. The second verse has been understood in a variety of ways. The most obvious and simple interpretation, and, therefore, if according to the analogy of Scripture, the best, is to understand “the branch of the Lord”<sup>1</sup> of the Messiah at his second coming. He is often described by this or kindred metaphors. He is called a tender plant—a root out of a dry ground—the root and offspring of David—the branch of righteousness—the man whose name is the Branch. In these places, the reference is manifestly to the Messiah. And it is to be remarked, that in the passages where such expressions occur, it is in connexion with the restoration of his ancient people; for example, “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto

<sup>1</sup> Branch, or shoot, sprout, as that which springs up from the root of a tree when cut down, from צמח, to spring up.

David a righteous Branch, and a king shall reign and prosper. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely," Jer. xxiii. 5, 6. And again, "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David," Jer. xxxiii. 14-16. When the curses still resting on Israel shall be withdrawn, Christ shall be "beauty and glory" for them that shall survive these. In reference to the same yet future period, it is written, "In the Lord all the seed of Israel shall glory," xlv. 25. "The Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. The Lord shall be to thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory," lx. 1, 19. "Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls, for I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her," Zech. ii. 4. But not only will the people be blessed, the land also will be blessed: "The fruit of the earth or of the land shall be excellent and comely." This expression has been generally regarded as synonymous with the other, "the Branch of the Lord;" but the exposition is very forced. There is no reason why the language should not have its natural and obvious sense. In the day referred to, blessings are often promised to the land of Judea as well as to the people. It also needs them—it has borne its curse as much as they. "Then shall *the earth* (the land) yield her increase," (blessing to the land); "and God, even our God, shall bless us," (blessing to the people), Ps. lxvii. 6. "The Lord shall give that which is good, and *our land* shall yield her increase," Ps. lxxxv. 12. "I will make them, and the places round about my hill, a blessing; and the tree of the field shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land, when he has broken the bands of their yoke," Ezek. xxxiv. 26, 27. In the



covenant made with them as a peculiar people, it is expressly mentioned, that when they should return to the Lord, the land would be blessed: "Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and I will remember the land," Lev. xxvi. 42. These blessings are promised to them that are escaped of Israel. The two tribes of Judah and Benjamin are known in Scripture as the "dispersed of Judah." They have been long scattered over the kingdoms of the earth; but is it a different title which is given to the other ten tribes, who have been for ages unknown? They are in different places called "the outcasts of Israel." They are literally the *lost* sheep of the house of Israel. But they, as well as the two tribes, will be restored to their own land. I will both *search* my sheep and *seek them out*. "I will seek that which was lost, I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel," Ezek. xxxiv. 11. "He that scattereth Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd doth his flock," Jer. xxxi. 10. "I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee, I will surely gather the remnant of Israel," Micah ii. 12. It is, however, only *they that are escaped of Israel* that will be blessed. It is only a remnant of Israel that will, in the first instance, be gathered to Judea, and that remnant will be reduced by judgment. It is the remnant of a remnant that will receive the blessing. "Ah, Lord God! wilt thou make a full end of the remnant of Israel?" Ezek. xi. 13. "I will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, and I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face; and I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me," Ezek. xx. 34.

3, 4. *And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is*

*written among the living (or, to life) in Jerusalem : When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning.*

When the ancient people of God shall have been brought back to their own land, and when their iniquity shall have been purged away by judgment, terrible and effectual, like fire, they shall be a holy nation. The following are a few of the many passages which corroborate this part of the prophet's vision:—"I will take you from among the heathen, and will gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then shall I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you," Ezek. xxxvi. 25. "I will gather them out of all countries whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God; and I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever," Jer. xxxii. 37. "The people also shall be all righteous," Isaiah lx. 21. "In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness unto the Lord. Yea, every pot in Judah and in Jerusalem shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts," Zech. xiv. 20, 21.—The expression, "among the living,"<sup>1</sup> like the others, "them that are escaped of Israel," and "he that remaineth in Jerusalem," refers to the reduced numbers of the nation after their judgments, when but a small remnant of those in the land, a third part, shall survive.—"By the spirit of judgment." The word rendered spirit signifies, *first*, wind, air, then breath. Here it signifies breath. The fire and sword with which the Lord will plead with the nation, will be as it were the breathing of the Lord's indignation. "With the breath of his lips," in allusion also

<sup>1</sup> כָּל הַחַיִּים לְחַיִּים, should be translated "every one written for life," as in the margin, that is, every one who shall survive.

to the season of national judgments, "will he slay the wicked," xi. 4. Verse 4 may be connected either with the preceding or the subsequent verse. The meaning is the same either way.

5, 6. *And the Lord will create upon every dwelling-place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night : for upon (or, above) all the glory shall be a defence (or, covering). And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the day time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.*

These verses contain a description, the one of the favour, the other of the protection to be enjoyed by the Jewish nation after their conversion. The language is borrowed from the account given of the defence and guidance vouchsafed to them in the journey from Egypt to Canaan. Then there was extended to them a manifestation of God's presence and guardianship in the cloud and pillar of fire, and the shechinah in the tabernacle, such as no other nation has ever experienced, and such they will enjoy again. It is not necessary to suppose that that presence and guardianship will be manifested in the very way in which they were then—there will not be that occasion for the literal cloud and pillar of fire which there was of old : it is enough to understand the passage as intimating, that in some way or other suited to the circumstances of the Jews at that time, as the pillar and cloud were before, will the favour of God for the nation be again manifested.—The expression, "upon all the glory," implies two things,—the glorious condition of the nation, and the permanence of its glory. The protection which they will enjoy is enlarged on in the concluding verse. The exercise of the divine favour will be to them what the tent is in the desert—what a shadow is from the heat—what a covert is from the storm. The same idea of tranquillity and repose is expressed when it is said, "the effect of righteousness shall be quietness, and assurance for ever. And my

people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places," xxxii. 17, 18.

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## CHAPTER V.

THIS chapter appears to form the conclusion of the vision begun at chapter ii., there being nothing to indicate the commencement of another. The subjects of it are similar to those of previous visions ; it differs only in the details. Like the others, it presents a prophetic description of the privileges of the ancient people of God, their sins, their sufferings, and the blessings in store for them.

1-7. *Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill (or, the horn of the son of oil): and he fenced (or, made a wall about) it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made (or, hewed) a wine-press therein : and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it ? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes ? And now go to ; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard : I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up ; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down (or, for a treading) : and I will lay it waste : it shall not be pruned nor digged ; but there shall come up briers and thorns : I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant (or, plant of his pleasures) : and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression (or, a scab) ; for righteousness, but behold a cry.*

The subjects named are condensed very beautifully in these verses in the form of a song, and under a metaphor very familiar in an eastern country. The Jewish nation



is very frequently represented in Scripture by a vineyard. "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt, thou hast cast out the heathen and planted it," Ps. lxxx. 8. "I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed," Jer. ii. 21. "There was a certain householder who planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about," Matt. xxi. 23. The Jews were distinguished from Gentile nations as the well-cultivated vineyard is from the surrounding desert. The care bestowed upon them by God has been of a kind with the pains of the vine-dresser, in fencing, and cleaning, and protecting his vineyard. The ill return made by Israel to the Almighty for their advantages, is fitly represented by the vineyard which should bring forth grapes bringing forth wild grapes. The disappointment and astonishment of God, who looked for judgment (justice), but behold oppression; for righteousness (righteous dealing), but behold a cry—the cry of the oppressed—are compared to those of the vine-dresser, who looks for grapes, but finds wild grapes. The condemnation of so glaring impropriety and iniquity might be left to the guilty parties themselves. "O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge betwixt me and my vineyard." The destruction of the nation would be as deserved and complete as is that of the barren vineyard, which, when the patience of its owner is exhausted, has its hedges taken away, and its walls broken down, and is laid waste. No picture could represent more forcibly the character and the doom of the twelve tribes. They have manifested the barrenness of the unfruitful vineyard, and they have been reduced to its desolation.

8. *Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they (or, ye) may be placed alone in the midst of the earth!*

The vision now passes from this epitome of the nation's history to an enumeration of specific sins with their appropriate punishments. The sin of avarice is first noticed;

one with which the Jews are often charged in the sacred volume, and which has been so characteristic of this race as to have become proverbial. "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him. I hid me, and was wroth," lvii. 17. "The people of the land have used oppression and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy; yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully," Ezek. xxii. 29. "They covet fields, and take them by violence; and houses, and take them away," Micah ii. 2. The joining house to house, and laying field to field, was contrary to the whole spirit of the law of Moses, particularly as set forth in the circumstances of the year of jubilee. But how has the Jewish nation been spoiled in righteous retribution for this sin? Its punishment is predicted in the two following verses,—

9, 10. *In (or, this is in) mine ears said the Lord of hosts, Of a truth (or, if not) many houses shall be desolate, even great and fair, without inhabitant. Yea, ten acres of vineyard shall yield one bath, and the seed of an homer shall yield an ephah.*

As the sin is twofold, the avaricious and rapacious appropriation both of houses and fields, so the punishment is twofold; and most literally has it been fulfilled. Not only houses great and fair, but even whole cities, are now without inhabitant, in a country once distinguished for its populousness. (See chap. vi. 11.) The barrenness of the land is of a piece with the depopulation of the houses. The predicted curse, that ten acres should yield one bath, or a few gallons (about  $7\frac{1}{2}$ ) of wine, and the seed of an homer yield an ephah, or about a tenth part of the seed sown, has also lighted on the soil. That land, so well adapted as it is for the growth of the vine, and which was once famed for its wines, furnishes—and that only in a small quantity, for the culture of the grape was forbidden by the Moslem government—wine, which is said to be "probably the very worst to be met with in any country;" and its barrenness is such, that "a tract from which

a hundred individuals draw a scanty subsistence, formerly maintained thousands."

11-17. *Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink ; that continue until night, till wine inflame (or, pursue) them ! And the harp, and the viol, the tabret, and pipe, and wine, are in their feasts : but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands. Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge : and their honourable men are famished (or, glory are men of famine), and their multitude dried up with thirst. Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure : and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it. And the mean man shall be brought down, and the mighty man shall be humbled, and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled : but the Lord of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God that is holy (or, the God the holy, or, the holy God) shall be sanctified in righteousness. Then shall the lambs feed after their manner, and the waste places of the fat ones shall strangers eat.*

After their avarice, the intemperate and dissolute habits of the Jewish nation are noticed and condemned, and a corresponding punishment denounced. As the punishment of the previous vice was to be the destruction of the possessions which it had accumulated, and which fed it, so the abuse of their liberty would lead to its removal. They who had indulged in dissipation from morning until night would go into captivity—instead of their luxurious feasts, their honourable men would be famished—instead of following strong drink, their multitude would be dried up with thirst—instead of the music of the harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe—signs of wealth and luxury—their glory and pomp, and even the people themselves—the multitude—and he that rejoiceth, would perish. These, and the other prophetic announcements regarding Israel, have long been, like the preceding, historic facts. How seldom have they been free from all the miseries of captivity? Even where they have not borne the name of captives, they have experienced, in almost every land, all the horrors of captivity. How often have famine

and thirst been the portion of their mean and their mighty together? How have their glory and their pomp found with themselves an insatiable grave in every country; and especially in their own has the grave opened her mouth without measure. How significant is the language! Hell, in the Hebrew *sheol*, in the Greek *hades*, that is, the state of the dead—here, the grave, hath enlarged herself. The grave of the nation's glory has not been one whose mouth is of ordinary dimensions; to receive it with sufficient rapidity—to swallow it up utterly, it has been enlarged. The lambs of the Bedouin Arabs now feed undisturbed over the length and breadth of that pasture of flocks. The country is overrun with these tribes and other strangers, who now eat the waste-places of the fat ones. These are terrible things, but still terrible things in righteousness. The desolations of Judea, while they bear witness to the guilt of the nation, proclaim as loudly the justice of the Almighty. That attribute is written on the face of every ruin. It is read in the whole aspect of a sinful world stricken with judgment, and full of woe; but is doubly distinct in the doubly cursed land of Israel. Over every part of it divine justice is seen sitting; but there the Lord is beheld *exalted* in judgment, (justice, righteousness.)

18, 19. *Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope: that say, Let him make speed, and hasten his work, that we may see it: and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it!*

The sin which is next specified is one which is peculiarly offensive to God. The Jewish nation is described as taunting the Almighty with the delay of his threatened judgments—as daring him to punish—as abusing his forbearance with them, crying ironically, “let him make speed and hasten his work, that we may see it.” This charge, so indicative of a seared conscience, is frequently brought against them. “Behold, they say, where is the



word of the Lord? let it come now," Jer. xvii. 15. "What is that proverb that ye have in the land of Israel, saying, the days are prolonged, and every vision faileth?" Ezek. xii. 22. It is this spirit which is said to be characteristic of the scoffers in the last days, where it is written, that they shall ask, "Where is the promise of his coming?" Such hardness of heart denotes thorough devotedness to sin—the putting forth of all one's powers to it, as is done by the man who draws a burden with cords, or with the strongest rope. But wo has come on Israel for this iniquity. Their sinning overmuch—their proceeding to the extreme verge of sin is often pointed out. In the following passage, for example, in Jer. xlv. 16, 17, we find them represented as going to the utmost length which the depravity of man can carry him. "As for the word that thou (Jeremiah) hast spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee. But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense to the queen of heaven."

20-23. *Woe unto them that call evil (or, say concerning evil it is) good, and good evil: that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! (or, before their face!) Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink: which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!*

Other sins of the nation are specified and denounced. They are represented as not only forgetting the distinction drawn by God between sin and righteousness, but as even reversing it; calling evil good, and good evil. Every natural man feels so towards sin and righteousness—the evil appears good, the good appears evil; but what is here intended seems to be the infidel defence of this in the spirit of the passage last quoted. Darkness and bitterness, light and sweetness, are the two most distinguishing qualities of evil and good, which they are here used beautifully to represent. Another of the national vices con-

demned here, is their self-conceit (21)—a trait of the Jewish character which was frequently reprov'd by our Lord. Another is intemperance (22). This is previously condemned in the chapter, but is returned to as being perhaps peculiarly prevalent. It is with dissipation in its greatest degree that the Jews are charged—with having acquired through habit the power of indulging largely in wine. “To mingle strong drink,” appears to refer to the mixing of spices and such like with the wine. The last of the vices enumerated (23) is the injustice of magistrates, who are described as being influenced by avarice more than justice, acquitting the guilty for bribes, and condemning the innocent, taking his righteousness away. From the connexion between the 22d and 23d verses, the judges appear to be charged with both the vices to which reference is made. The depravity of that part of the Jewish population, in the days of our Lord, is strongly reprobated in his addresses to the scribes and Pharisees.

24, 25. *Therefore as the fire (or, tongue of) devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. Therefore is the anger of the Lord kindled against his people, and he hath stretched forth his hand against them, and hath smitten them: and the hills did tremble, and their carcasses were torn (or, as dung) in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.*

The judgments of the nation for these, and their other sins, are here predicted. What was then prophecy has long been history. For these things their country has been devastated as utterly as is the field of stubble, or as is the chaff over which the flame has passed; and their nation has been prostrated like the tree whose root is rotten, and blighted like that which is overthrown and withered, whose dried and unnourished blossom is blown away as dust. For these things the anger of the Lord, so slow to kindle, has consumed them and their land like

fire; and his hand been stretched out, not for protection, but in judgment; the hills have been made to tremble by earthquakes, and the carcasses of the Jews have been as dung in their streets, particularly on the occasion of the destruction of their cities by the Roman general. This has been the case in some degree in their past history; but these predictions will yet receive a more terrible accomplishment. For of a period still future it is written, "In that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel, so that the mountains shall be thrown down," Ezek. xxxviii. 20. "I beheld the mountains, and lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly," Jer. iv. 24. "They shall not be gathered nor be buried—they shall be for dung upon the face of the earth," Jer. viii. 2. "Thus saith the Lord, even the carcasses of men shall fall as dung upon the open field, and as the handful after the husbandman, and none shall gather them," Jer. ix. 22. The judgments of the Jewish nation have been in proportion to their iniquities—they have not passed over in a little—they have not yet passed over. Notwithstanding all that is already past, the anger of the Lord is not turned away, his hand is still stretched out in judgment. There are heavier judgments yet in store for them, which are alluded to in the following verses,—

26-30. *And he will lift up an ensign to the nations from far, and will hiss unto them from the end of the earth: and, behold, they shall come with speed swiftly: none shall be weary nor stumble among them; none shall slumber nor sleep; neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken: whose arrows are sharp, and all their bows bent, their horses' hoofs shall be counted like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind: their roaring shall be like a lion, they shall roar like young lions: yea, they shall roar, and lay hold of the prey, and shall carry it away safe, and none shall deliver it. And in that day they shall roar against them like the roaring of the sea: and if one look unto the land, behold darkness and sorrow (or, distress), and the light is darkened in the heavens (or, when it is light, it shall be dark in the destructions) thereof.*

These verses give a description of the enemies of Israel,

of whom it is said, of a period which the context shews to be future, "I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle," Zech. xiv. 2. The same allusion to lifting up an ensign or standard is of frequent occurrence. "All ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, see ye, when he lifteth up an ensign on the mountains, and when he bloweth a trumpet, hear ye," Isaiah xviii. 3. "Blow ye the trumpet in the land: cry, gather together, and say, assemble yourselves, and let us go into the defended cities. Set up the standard towards Zion: retire, stay not, for I will bring evil from the north, and a great destruction. For this, gird you with sackcloth, lament and howl: for the fierce anger of the Lord is not turned back from us," Jer. iv. 5, 6, 8. The lifting up a standard was a common way of collecting the inhabitants of a district for the purpose of offensive or defensive warfare.—"He will hiss unto them." The allusion here is supposed to be to a method of collecting bees together—different writers recording that this was done in Syria by a hissing noise. What this ensign, this hissing, will be—what will be the immediate cause which is to assemble the nations together, may be made matter of conjecture, but is not revealed, and must be left undetermined until the day declare it. But even in the present condition of Judea, how easily might circumstances occur which would make it the battle-field of the nations of the earth. Some arrangement of Providence will be made the means of assembling the nations; and the summons will be speedily obeyed—they shall come with speed swiftly. In other passages descriptive of the same event, it is written, "He shall come up as clouds, and his chariots shall be as a whirlwind: his horses are swifter than eagles," Jer. iv. 13. "As horsemen so shall they run; they shall run like mighty men," Joel ii. 4.

In the remainder of the description, the host is represented as fresh and unexhausted by fatiguing marches,—



none shall be weary nor stumble among them—as excellently equipped with the instruments of war, with arrows, and bows, and horses, and chariots—as being altogether a most terrible foe, whose roaring (in allusion to the shout of an army when about to engage, or the roar of the wild beast before seizing its prey) is like that of a lion, or of the sea. For more detailed accounts of the nations to be gathered against Jerusalem in battle in the great and terrible day of the Lord, see Jer. iv. 5-13 ; Ezek. xxxviii. 8-13 ; Joel ii. 1-11. The occurrence of the events foretold will form a dark page in the history of God's ancient people. “If one look unto the land, the land of Judah, behold darkness and sorrow. It will be a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness,” Joel ii. 2.—“Their horses' hoofs shall be counted like flint.” If there be truth in the supposition that the ancients did not shoe their horses, hoofs like flint would be an excellent quality in the horse.

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## CHAPTER VI.

THIS chapter forms a separate vision. The prediction with which it closes, relative to the duration of the calamities of Israel previously mentioned, is introduced with a detailed account of the extraordinary circumstances with which the vision was communicated to the prophet.

1-4. *In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train (or, the skirts thereof) filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another (or, this cried to this), and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory (or, his glory is the fulness of the whole*

*earth). And the posts of the door (or, thresholds) moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.*

These verses contain the description of a vision of the Lord seen by Isaiah. The person of the Godhead who appears in this, as in the other manifestations of the Deity recorded in Scripture, is the second person, the Son. That this is the case is evident from one of the quotations of the 9th and 10th verses made in the New Testament. When narrating the rejection of Christ by the Jews, John says, "Esaias said again, he hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted ; and I should heal them. These things said Esaias when he saw his glory (that is, Christ's glory), and spake of him," John xii. 40, 41. The scene of the vision is the temple at Jerusalem. The Messiah is represented as a king, attended by the usual accompaniments of royalty in the East, seated on a throne, with the long flowing robe of the oriental monarch falling to the ground, and forming a train—having, as his attendants, the seraphim, one of the highest ranks of the "nobility of heaven." This representation of the Lord resembles what is given in other visions. In that seen by Micaiah, we read, "I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand, and on his left," 1 Kings xxii. 19. And in one of the visions of John, he writes, "I was in the spirit, and behold a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne, and round about the throne were four and twenty seats," Rev. iv. 2. The attitude of the seraphim, as seen by Isaiah, is one of awe, most becoming in the presence of Him on whom no man can look and live. The covering of their face with twain of their wings, indicated their inability to contemplate the divine glory unveiled ; the covering of their feet with twain, thus probably completing the covering of the whole person, was emblematical of their conscious unworthiness

to appear in so majestic a presence ; and the flying with twain, implied their readiness to fulfil the commands of their Lord. Their occupation is not less interesting than their attitude—they were engaged in the worship of the Holy One. They are represented as similarly engaged in one of the visions of John. “The four beasts (*ζωα*, living creatures) had each of them six wings about him, and they were full of eyes within ; and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty,” Rev. iv. 8. Not only are the angelic seraphim thus affected by the presence of the Lord, but the door-posts of the temple are described as being moved, and the house as filled with smoke—a familiar symbol of Jehovah’s presence. “The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power,” Rev. xv. 8.

5. *Then said I, Woe is me ! for I am undone (or, cut off) ; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips : for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.*

The prophet did not remain unmoved when angels were so affected, and even the inanimate door-posts were disturbed. His view of the King, the Lord of Hosts, overwhelmed him with a sense of his unworthiness. “Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips.” The same effect was produced on Job by his insight into God’s character,—“Now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself,” Job xlii. 16. The cases of Daniel, x. 8, and of Peter, Luke v. 8, furnish other examples. Still more powerfully was John affected on a similar occasion, “When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead,” Rev. i. 17.

6-8. *Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand (or, in his hand a live coal), which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar : and he laid it upon (or, caused it to touch) my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips ; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us ? Then said I, Here am I (or, behold me) ; send me.*

The dismay of the prophet was not long continued. A seraph touched his lips with a live coal from off the altar, and assured him that his iniquity was taken away. The burning coal from the altar was an appropriate emblem of the sacrifice of Christ—and no doubt the prophet saw in the sign the thing signified—and the declaration that his iniquity, which was the cause of his fears, was taken away, would be well calculated to reassure him, and to excite such a glow of gratitude in his bosom as would dispose him without reserve to obey the call, Whom shall I send? But there is probably peculiar reference in the passage to the work of Isaiah as a prophet of the Lord. What he saw taught him his own unfitness to speak of the things which concerned so great a king; but the touching of his lips with the burning coal would indicate that his unfitness for conveying the message of the Lord was now removed—that his lips were now opened. Hence his ready response, Here am I, send me. Hence his willingness to engage in the most unwelcome and arduous work to which the servant of Christ is called. Hence his readiness to speak even to a people of unclean lips. A similar incident occurs in the history of Jeremiah, Jer. i. 4-10.

9, 10. *And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye (or, in hearing, or, without ceasing), indeed, but understand not : and see ye (or seeing) indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes ; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.*

These verses contain the commission given to the prophet, and its effects upon the nation to whom he was to declare, and to complain of, their blindness and hardness of heart—a proceeding which would be followed by an increase of the evil. The well-known difficulty in this and similar passages, arises from the use of two Hebraisms—in the one, the instrument is said to do what is done



by God himself; in the other, God is said to do what he permits to be done. Isaiah made the heart of the people fat, only as the instrument in God's hands; and God made their heart fat, only in the sense of permitting it to be so. Stripped of its Hebrew idiom, the passage simply predicts that the remonstrances of the prophet—no uncommon occurrence—would have a hardening, not a subduing effect. It is in this sense that it is interpreted by our Lord himself, the very one who first announced it—the best authority for determining how it is to be understood. In the gospel of Matthew he says, "In this is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand. For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes *they* have closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes." According to the Scriptural rule of comparing spiritual things with spiritual—interpreting his own words as the Saviour did—the passage presents no difficulty: it describes the impenitence of the Jews as springing from the same source as the impenitence of every sinner, from an unwillingness on their part to receive his message. It will be enough for the justification of God, and the confusion of the unsanctified at last, that, while it is said, "Make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes," it is also said, "Their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed." The Almighty permitted it to be so, or, according to Scripture language, did it, in the exercise of that sovereignty whereby he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy—an attribute which belongs to him as much as any of his other perfections—a prerogative which he claims—which he is entitled to—which from the beginning he has exercised, and which he will exercise to the end. The Providence of God is utterly inexplicable without giving to his sovereignty a large place among his perfections. The word of God to the Jews by Isaiah and his other prophets, has

had the very effect which is here ascribed to it. To this hour they are "the blind people, that have eyes; and the deaf people, that have ears," xliii. 8. They have groped at noonday as the blind gropeth in darkness.

11-13. *Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate (or, desolation), and the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land. But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return (or, when it is returned, and hath been browsed), and shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance (or, stock, or stem) is in them, when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.*

The prophet, now that his lips have been touched by the burning coal, does not object to proclaim a message which would be so offensive to the Jews, and in the end so disastrous; but is emboldened to ask, How long so deplorable a state of things as closed ears and blinded eyes would continue with the Jewish people? The answer is, that their unbelief, as a nation, would continue until their cities should be wasted without inhabitant, &c. Their land has undergone repeated desolations from the time of their captivity in Babylon downwards; but on none of these occasions has its desolation come up to the degree predicted here, for when their land shall reach this degree of desolation, their impenitence will cease: it continues only until then; of no past judgments, therefore, can the passage be understood. But how closely does the present state of Judea correspond with the description given of it in the reply made to the prophet. There are now cities wasted without inhabitant, that is, both in ruins and uninhabited, almost without number. There are also houses without man, that is, houses in a state of preservation, but without inhabitant. Not only do all travellers notice the vast number of ruined towns that cover the land—within the circuit of a small distance from Jerusalem, there are said, for example, to be no fewer than sixty-four of these—but they also notice the prevalence, east of Jordan, not

only of houses, but even of whole streets and towns, in good preservation, but uninhabited. Burckhardt, at great length, and more recently Mr. Buckingham, Mr. G. Robinson, Lord Lindsay, and others, all assert the existence of several deserted cities. One is said to contain 800 houses, another 400 ; one to be about three miles in circumference, another four. The buildings are said to be "for the greater part in complete preservation"—to be "seemingly in good repair." The land now approaches very nearly the condition of being utterly desolate ; briers and thorns have taken the place of corn and wine and oil. There are wild beasts and flocks without number, but men have been removed far away. The population of Jerusalem, which has of late been largely augmented, amounts to from 12,000 to 15,000 ; that of the whole of Syria to about a million and a quarter, a mere handful in comparison of the millions with which the country teemed in the days of its prosperity. But the prophetic description is still more definite. A very small remnant, the prophet had been taught before, would be left ; and that remnant is here limited to a tenth. "In it shall be a tenth." This very degree of desolation is predicted in another passage : "The city that went out by a thousand shall leave a hundred (a tenth), and that which went forth by a hundred shall leave ten to the house of Israel," Amos v. 3. How exactly this prediction has been verified is attested by the Report of Dr. Bowring on the Statistics of Syria, drawn up by order of the British Government ; and it is worthy of remark, that the statement was furnished by Mr. Moore, the British Consul at Beyrout, in perfect unconsciousness, as he assured a friend, of its conformity with the prophecy of Isaiah announced 2600 years before. "Syria is a country whose population bears no proportion to its superficies, and the inhabitants may be considered, on the most moderate calculation, as reduced to a tithe of what the soil could abundantly maintain under a wiser

system of administration," p. 111. And, in another place, in reference to Northern Syria, it is stated, that "the country is capable of producing tenfold the present produce," p. 90.—"It shall return and shall be eaten." It is not easy to attach any intelligible meaning to this translation. The interpretation generally adopted is, "it," that is, the land, "shall undergo repeated destruction."<sup>1</sup> That this will occur, and that it will occur subsequently to the restoration of the Jews to their own land, is repeatedly predicted. See chap. xvii. 6, 14. Thus, we read in Ezek. xxxviii. 8-13, "In the latter years thou (in reference to enemies of Israel) shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword (Judea), and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste." Throughout the passage, the ancient people of God are represented as returned to their own land—as dwelling safely; but their peace in their restored, but at first unconverted state, is not to be unbroken. For we read of Gog and his host going up against Jerusalem, and of God speaking in jealousy, and in the fire of his anger—of there being a great shaking in the land of Israel. Again, still in reference to the same events, we read in Joel ii., "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain," shewing that Judea is to be the scene of the events which follow. "The day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand; a day of darkness and of gloominess." And then in predicting the havoc caused by the enemies gathered against Jerusalem, a great people and a strong, it is said, "The land is as the garden of Eden before them," implying, that then it will not be, as now, desolate, for with the return of favour to the people, it will return to the land; but its prosperity will not at that stage be uninterrupted; for "behind them," it is added, when the enemy hath passed, "a deso-

<sup>1</sup> Shall be eaten, from בָּעָר, to feed, burn up, consume.



late wilderness." And then at a period subsequent to this, when the people shall not only have been restored to their own land, but shall have returned to the Lord, "the Lord will answer and say unto his people, behold I will send you corn and wine and oil." In these and similar passages, is found ample corroboration of the prediction of Isaiah, that the land would undergo repeated desolation. These events, the depopulation of the cities, the desolation of the land, the reduction of its inhabitants to a tenth, and its repeated desolation, answer the question put by the prophet,—determine how long the spiritual blindness of Israel is to continue.

But although judgment should follow upon judgment, and the land should be often made desolate, the nation would never utterly perish. On the contrary, as new shoots spring up from the stem of the decayed teil (turpentine) tree or oak, so there would be life in the withered and prostrate stem of Judah, which no combination of enemies, and no succession of judgments, would be suffered to destroy. Israel, although so long resembling the decayed and prostrate stem, "shall yet blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit," xxvii. 6.

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## CHAPTER VII.

It is not easy to determine how far that portion of the book which commences with this chapter extends. It embraces at least the whole of this and the following chapter, and part of the ninth. Some suppose the division to terminate with chapter ix. 7, others at chapter x. 4. There is, however, nothing to indicate distinctly a new vision until the commencement of the thirteenth chapter, and therefore this one may be regarded as extending to

the end of the twelfth. Along with allusions to the historical events of the time, it comprehends some striking predictions, fulfilled and unfulfilled. It is a section which has been thought very difficult of interpretation.

1, 2. *And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up toward Jerusalem to war against it, but could not prevail against it. And it was told the house of David, saying, Syria is confederate with (or, rested on) Ephraim. And his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind.*

The chapter commences with an historical statement of the circumstances under which the predictions it contains were delivered. These are recorded at greater length in 2 Kings xvi. 1-5, and 2 Chron. xxviii. 1-5. Rezin and Pekah, the neighbouring kings of Syria and Israel, had, in succession, made war on Ahaz, king of Judah; and although the Jews had suffered much from their assaults, a great number having been carried captive and brought to Damascus by the former, and 120,000 slain on one occasion, on one day, by the latter, yet neither of them succeeded in possessing himself of Jerusalem. But word was brought to Ahaz, who was then seated on the throne of the house of David, that his two enemies, the kings of Syria and Ephraim or Israel, had combined together against him—intelligence which was received with a degree of agitation not to be wondered at, considering what injury they had inflicted when acting singly; agitation so great that it moved the king and his people, as the trees of the wood are moved by the wind.

3-9. *Then said the Lord unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou, and Shear-jashub thy son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway (or, causeway) of the fuller's field; and say unto him, Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither be faint-hearted (or, let not thy heart be tender) for the two tails of these smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah. Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah, have taken evil counsel against thee, saying, Let us go up against Judah, and vex (or, waken)*

*it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal: Thus saith the Lord God, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass. For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin; and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not (or, from) a people. And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son. If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established, (or, Do ye not believe? It is because ye are not stable.)*

At this juncture, Isaiah is directed by the Lord to repair to a spot pointed out to him, where he would meet Ahaz, and to assure him that the intentions of the two hostile kings would be defeated. What spot is meant by the conduit or aqueduct of the upper pool is uncertain, from the difficulty of determining which of the wells about Jerusalem is intended. The contemptuous terms in which the two kings are mentioned (4) was calculated to give encouragement to Ahaz; they were not firebrands that would burn long and intensely; they were but the tails, the remnants, which would not have long to burn; they were only smoking, not burning; they would soon expire. Ahaz might justly have forfeited the divine interference, but the sceptre was not at that time, and in that way, to depart from the house of David. He is assured that the attempt to subject the nation to a strange king (5, 6)<sup>1</sup> would be frustrated (7). The word of the Lord was positive—"it shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass." The kings of Syria and Israel would not succeed in annexing Judea to their own territory. Damascus was, and would continue, the capital of Syria (8). Samaria was, and would continue, the capital of Ephraim or Israel. Rezin, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, were, and would continue, the kings of these countries, and of these only (9). As a further encouragement, the early destruction of Ephraim itself is predicted (8, last clause). Many of the Israelites were led captive during the reign of Pekah, by Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, 2 Kings xv. 29; and at

<sup>1</sup> Nothing further is known of the person called the son of Tabeal.

a subsequent period, many more by Shalmaneser, another Assyrian king, 2 Kings xvii. 5, 6. But the nation did not become then utterly extinct, 2 Chron. xxxv. 18; and it was not until the last remains of Israel were carried away by Esarhaddon, which seems to have occurred when Manasseh was taken captive, as has been computed, in the twenty-second year of his reign, or within sixty-five years of the date of the prophecy, that Ephraim was "not a people." The import of the conclusion of the ninth verse appears to be, that although, on this occasion, God interposed his protection to the house of David, it would not yet be vouchsafed long; their deliverance would be temporary, not permanent, if, like Ahaz, they did not believe in the word of the Lord.

10-16. *Moreover, the Lord spake again (or, And the Lord added to speak) unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God: ask it either in the depth (or, make thy petition deep), or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord. And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall (or, thou, O Virgin, shalt) call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings.*

Ahaz probably remaining unassured, the Lord proceeds to confirm his word by a sign—a course followed on many other occasions. For his own satisfaction and conviction, Ahaz is told to ask any sign whatever that he chose (11); but the wicked prince, unwilling to have any dealings with that God whose laws he trampled upon, refuses (12), and refuses on the hypocritical plea of religious feeling: "I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord." The prophet, after giving vent to the indignation which the reply of Ahaz provoked (13), announced a sign from the Lord himself (14), thus placing Ahaz in a position of



greater responsibility than that from which he flattered himself that he had escaped. "The Lord himself shall give you a sign, Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son." Instead of entering upon the different views which have been taken of this much controverted passage, the reader is referred to Hengstenberg, Barnes, &c., where the subject is fully discussed. Two things appear evident from the first glance at the passage. First, it describes the birth of the Messiah. This is the natural, the *prima facie* view of the passage. And secondly, that it is connected with the birth of a child soon to take place, otherwise it could form no sign to Ahaz of his early deliverance from his enemies—the immediate purpose for which the sign was given. The meaning of the passage requires the one view, the context requires the other. And the reason why both the birth of Christ at a distant day, and the birth of a child, the child of the prophet, at an early day, are introduced, appears to be that they bore directly, each of them, upon the subject which most interested Ahaz and the Jews, viz., the establishment of the throne of David. It is to be remarked that the prediction is made to Ahaz as being of the "house of David." God had sworn to David that a king should never cease to sit upon his throne. "Thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee; thy throne shall be established for ever," 2 Sam. vii. 16. (The birth of Christ is represented in different places as a sign—a pledge on the part of God, that he would not depart from his covenant; that the throne would not be utterly subverted, but would be finally established. Thus, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulders.... of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end; upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it and to establish it," ix. 6, 7. Here the birth of Christ is represented as a pledge of the establishment of the throne and kingdom of David.

Again, "Turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities. How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter? for the Lord hath created *a new thing* in the earth, a woman shall compass a man." Here, too, the miracle of a woman compassing a man, that is, carrying in the womb a man-child, is so connected with the context as to appear a proof that backsliding Israel would return; that the Lord would bring back her captivity. (And in like manner, the house of David, in the person of Ahaz and of the Jews, who needed, like him, to be reassured, for they were all agitated together—the house of David, in their person, is reminded and assured by the familiar and recognised pledge, that his throne would not be finally subverted, for "a virgin should conceive, and bear a son, and call his name Immanuel" (14). But this was not enough to allay the present fears of Ahaz and the Jews. It might be true that the ultimate safety of the kingdom was thus guaranteed; there might be no permanent subversion of the throne of David; it might be secured according to the divine promise; but that was not enough in their present circumstances; a formidable danger, threatening their immediate destruction, hung over them; they needed some sign of the present as well as of the ultimate security of the throne. Accordingly, this is given (16); the prophet proceeds to meet their present case, their immediate exigency; he passes from the general to a particular pledge—from a sign bearing on their future nationality, to one securing their present deliverance; and foretells that before a child, soon to be born, should know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that they abhorred should be forsaken of both her kings—the kings who then threatened them. This would be intelligible language to Ahaz and the Jewish nation, for they would doubtless be aware of what the prophet announces in the following chapter, "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for

4.19

signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts." We can therefore suppose that Ahaz would have no difficulty in applying the language of the 16th verse to the child of Isaiah, even allowing that no more distinct intimation was given to him than that contained in the prophecy. What the seed of the woman was to the house of David, in all ages, this child of Isaiah was to Ahaz and his people. That the child of Isaiah is intended seems undeniable; not only from the statement in a following chapter, that his children were for signs; but also from the minute detail given of the birth of a child of the prophet, and from the public notice taken of it. Indeed, the events recorded in that passage are just the fulfilment of the prediction contained in these verses. In the prophecy, there thus appears to be a transition from the seed of the woman—the pledge against the ultimate subversion of the throne of David, to the child of Isaiah—the pledge against its then present subversion. The prediction is twofold; it announces first that the promised pledge of the security of David's throne would be born of a virgin. Hence the name under which he was first foretold—the seed of the woman; he was born of woman, but not of man. And it announces also that before the child of Isaiah—the pledge of Ahaz's safety—should be able to distinguish between good and evil, the land which he abhorred, the kingdoms of Syria and Israel now united against him, would be forsaken of both her kings.—The clause, "Butter and honey shall he eat," appears to be equivalent to saying that he would be nourished like other children; these articles, according to different writers, constituting the common food of children in the East. The import of the conjunction *that*, in this connexion, is evidently *until*. He shall be nourished like other children, until he shall know to distinguish between good and evil, which appears to be the meaning of knowing to refuse the evil, and choose the good. The prediction received a speedy and literal ful-

filment. Within the period indicated—within the period in which a child will acquire the power of discriminating, that is, within two or three years, Rezin was slain by the king of Assyria, 2 Kings xvi. 9, and Pekah was slain by Hoshea, 2 Kings xv. 27.

17-25. *The Lord shall bring upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days that have not come, from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah ; even the king of Assyria. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall hiss for the fly that is in the uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria. And they shall come, and shall rest all of them in the desolate valleys, and in the holes of the rocks, and upon all thorns, and upon all bushes (or, commendable trees). In the same day shall the Lord shave with a razor that is hired, namely, by them beyond the river, by the king of Assyria, the head, and the hair of the feet ; and it shall also consume the beard. And it shall come to pass, in that day, that a man shall nourish a young cow, and two sheep ; and it shall come to pass, for the abundance of milk that they shall give he shall eat butter : for butter and honey shall every one eat that is left in (or, in the midst of) the land. And it shall come to pass in that day, that every place shall be, where there were a thousand vines at a thousand silverlings, it shall even be for briers and thorns. With arrows and with bows shall men come thither ; because all the land shall become briers and thorns. And on all hills that shall be digged with the mattock, there shall not come thither the fear of briers and thorns : but it shall be for the sending forth of oxen, and for the treading of lesser cattle.*

The remainder of the chapter is prophetic of judgments which were to fall on Judah. As in other instances, it is not possible to determine clearly whether the predictions refer to judgments already inflicted, or yet to be so. Those experienced by the nation at the outset of their cloudy and dark day may be in many respects similar to those with which it will close ; the instruments of their chastisement and the countries of their oppressors may be in so far the same. Thus, in the present instance, Assyria and Egypt have been in past ages the rod of Judah's correction ; but they may be so again. It appears taught in other places, that they will yet be so : see x. 5, and xxx. 3. Generally,



the whole field of Judah's history, what is most distant as well as what is nearest, seems to be embraced by the prophetic eye of Isaiah. Very generally, the question of time is not introduced, and in many cases he passes from the early to the final judgments of the Jews, without anything farther than the facts of the predictions to mark the period of their accomplishment.

An idea is given of the terribleness of the judgments which the prophet proceeds to foretell, by declaring that they were greater than any which had befallen the nation from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah, that is, from the day when the ten tribes of Israel separated from those of Judah and Benjamin in the days of Rehoboam. The severity of these judgments is indicated further by the figurative language in which the armies of Egypt and Assyria are described (18). They are compared to flies and bees—the latter a common metaphor in Scripture by which to describe an enemy, and a very significant one, from the pain of their sting; and the former also very expressive in the countries of the East, where the fly forms a familiar and formidable nuisance. These predictions were soon fulfilled by the repeated invasions both of Egyptian and Assyrian foes under Pharaoh-Necho, Nebuchadnezzar, and other kings. The severity of the predicted judgments is also indicated (20) by the figure of shaving with a razor the hair of the head, and feet, and beard, that is, of all the body—a treatment which was considered particularly disgraceful by eastern nations, among whom the hair is still regarded as so great an ornament, and in the culture of which so much pains is bestowed. It is further indicated (21, 22) by the circumstances that a cow and two sheep would constitute the whole property of a man, and the keeping of them his whole care, and that butter and honey would form the food of the whole population. This description does not at first sight seem to express any very great degree of

want. But if the circumstances of the country be considered, it is very significative of evil. To be possessed of only a few small cattle in a land where property consisted in a great measure of herds and flocks, was a sign of the deepest poverty. The very abundance of milk yielded by a few animals proclaims the desolation of the country, which is thus implied to be used for nothing but the pasturing of cattle. The large use of honey also implies that it would be a chief production of the country; that the bee would be a common and undisturbed tenant. Further, briers and thorns would take the place of the most valuable vineyards (23), and wild beasts would so take the place of man, that in travelling through it, bows and arrows would be necessary for defence (24), and the whole country would be pasture-ground for cattle (25). The clause—"There shall not come thither the fear of briers and thorns," which, as it stands, is unintelligible, is usually rendered, "Thou shalt not go there for fear of briers and thorns," implying that the spots which were formerly cultivated would be inaccessible from the thorns which cover them. The prevalence in Judea of briers and thorns, which are named thrice in the course of as many verses, as among the curses of the land, is well known. "Spots cultivated by the Bedouins" are said to "show fields of barley in the midst of plains of thorns or thistles." "The earth," wrote Volney, "produces only briers and wormwood." Speaking of one of the most fertile regions of the land, Burckhardt says that it is "covered with the thorny shrub merar." The state of Judea for many past ages corresponds in every feature with the description drawn by the hand of the prophet, and no doubt it is to the general condition of Judea up to, or even beyond, the present day that his language refers, and not only to the earlier desolations produced in the land by the armies of Egypt and Syria.

## CHAPTER VIII.

IN this chapter the prophet, after recording the fulfilment of the promise in the preceding, of a sign of the deliverance of Ahaz, returns to the subject of the troubles which were afterwards to befall the Jews.

1-4. *Moreover, the Lord said unto me, Take thee a great roll, and write in it with a man's pen concerning Mahar-shalal-hash-baz, (or, in making speed to the spoil he hasteneth the prey, or, make speed, &c.) And I took unto me faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah. And I went (or, approached) unto the prophetess; and she conceived, and bare a son: then said the Lord to me, Call his name Mahar-shalal-hash-baz. For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father and my mother, the riches of Damascus, and the spoil of Samaria, shall be taken away before the king of Assyria, (or, he that is before the king of Assyria shall take away the riches, &c.)*

The child which was the appointed sign of safety to Ahaz was about to be born, and in a matter of such importance to the nation, its birth is ordered to be publicly attested and recorded. Isaiah is commanded to take a great roll or tablet,<sup>1</sup> and to write in it concerning Mahar-shalal-hash-baz,—this name meaning “make haste to the spoil,” “hasten the prey,” and being intended to indicate the speedy destruction of Rezin and Pekah, the enemies of Judah, by the Assyrians. Accordingly, the prophet does so by public witnesses; and at the command of the Lord this name was given to the child of the prophetess, who was called so either from her being the wife of the

<sup>1</sup> תבליט, a tablet of wood, metal, or stone.

prophet, or herself a prophetess. The assurance of early deliverance to Ahaz and the Jews is repeated in different language, but to the same effect; the promise, "before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father and my mother," being evidently equivalent to that in the 16th verse of the previous chapter, that "before the child should be able to distinguish between good and evil, the land that Judah abhorred would be forsaken of both her kings."

5-8. *The Lord spake also unto me again, saying, Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son; now therefore, behold, the Lord (or, Adonai) bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory; and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks. And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over; he shall reach even to the neck: and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, (or, the fulness of the breadth of thy land shall be the stretchings out of his wings,) O Immanuel.*

Although, on this occasion, Judah should escape impending dangers, yet it would not be so with them always. But while the nation is reminded of its approaching calamities, it is also reminded of the cause of them: they refused the waters of Shiloah that go softly. Shiloah is a small stream in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, "whose waters," to quote the words of travellers, "flow with gentle murmurs from under the holy mountain of Zion." It was thus an emblem of the peaceful government instituted by God over the house of David; but this the Jewish nation had refused. They are charged, too, with rejoicing in Rezin and Pekah, from which it appears that not only were they all traitors to God, but that part of them were traitors to each other, and favoured the cause of the enemies of their country, the kings of Syria and Israel. For these reasons the Lord would bring against them the king of Assyria, whose kingdom extended along the Euphrates, and whose government, in



contrast with that of Judah, mild as the gentle stream, is represented as violent, like the impetuous river when it has overflowed its banks. Judah would be laid waste by Assyria, as the ground is devastated by the flooded river; it would be all but destroyed, as is the man whose neck the raging waters have reached; the whole land would be covered with foes, and as near destruction as is the victim of the bird of prey when it has stretched its wings over it ready to devour.

This prediction is very similar to that delivered in the close of the previous chapter. It is, however, more limited, and appears to refer to one particular invasion of the land by Assyria, doubtless to that which was made by Sennacherib in the reign of Hezekiah, of whom it is said that "he came up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them," 2 Kings xviii. 13. He literally overflowed the promised land, his conquests having extended from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean, Arphad on the sea-coast being enumerated among the cities which he subdued. But although he overflowed the land, he did not utterly subdue it; he reached only to the neck: for the answer of the Lord to the prayer of Hezekiah was, "He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it: by the way that he came, by the same shall he return," 2 Kings xix. 32, 33. But if the prophecy be understood of all the invasions of Judea by the Assyrians, or even as containing reference to future judgments to be inflicted from that quarter, it is equally true that all the enemies of Judah have reached, and shall reach, only to the neck. Other nations have sunk and disappeared beneath judgments less than those of Judah; but of her God has not made, and will not make, a full end.

9, 10. *Associate yourselves, O ye people, and (or, yet) ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear, all ye of far countries: gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall*

*be broken in pieces. Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought ; speak the word, and it shall not stand : for God (or, Immanuel) is with us.*

The allusion to Immanuel, in the close of the previous verse, leads to a declaration of the vanity of all assaults against his covenanted people. As if to indicate the certainty of their protection, and to inspire greater confidence, the subject of these verses is expressed in the language of taunt and irony. The enemies of Judah might combine and prepare themselves against her, but it would be to no purpose ; they would be broken in pieces ; their counsel would come to nought ; and not only so, but their hostility to Judah would be to their own damage and destruction. How literally has this been accomplished ! Whosoever has fallen on that stone has been broken. The Jews have often seemed a sure and easy prey ; but they remain, while their enemies have perished. Egyptians, Assyrians, Romans, and all their past oppressors, have been brought down ; and to those which still remain, or may yet arise, Jerusalem will be made a burdensome stone, with which all that burden themselves shall be cut in pieces, Zech. xii. 3. " I will curse him that curseth thee," Gen. xii. 3.

11-15. *For the Lord spake thus to me with a strong hand (or, in strength of hand), and instructed me, that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying, Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy ; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself ; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he shall be for a sanctuary ; but for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence, to both the houses of Israel ; for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.*

The prophet is here addressed by the Lord, and warned with a strong hand, or forcibly, not to go along with the people in the cry raised by them, which is described in the 12th verse. In that verse he warns the people, as directed, against the same cry, " Say ye not, A confederacy."

This may apply to the confederacy entered into against Judah between the kings of Syria and Samaria ; in this case the cry would be to this effect, There is a confederacy against us ; we are in peril ; there is an alliance formed between our enemies. Or it may apply to the confederacy formed between Judah and the king of Assyria, and then the cry would amount to this, We are in danger from the armies of Syria and Samaria, let us form a confederacy ; let us join in alliance with the Assyrians for our safety. In either case the cry indicated, on the part of Israel, the same unbecoming distrust of God, who had promised to be their defence. This spirit in the people is rebuked ; they are forbidden to indulge such fears ; they are urged to look to that quarter from which protection had been pledged to them (13), and to make God their fear. If they should do so, he would be to them what the altar was to the man who fled from his pursuers—a sanctuary. But the Lord, foreseeing that they would reject him as their refuge, his message to them by the prophet farther announces, in the way of timely warning, and also of prediction, that as they would not have him as their protector, he would become to both branches of his ancient people—to the house of Judah and to the house of Israel—what the rock is to those who fall on it and are bruised, what the snare is to the birds who are taken in it (14, 15). This prediction, from its including the ten tribes who were then at war with Judah, evidently looks beyond the subsequent calamities which befell Judah from the Assyrians and others, and appears to embrace in its range the whole future history of the ancient people of God ; and therefore the judgments which it threatens have to be understood as including those which are now past, which still continue, or which may yet await them.

16. *Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.*

This verse describes one of the judgments which would

overtake the nation, one which was both a natural and a judicial consequence of their sin; the testimony, or revelation of God to them, would be a sealed book. The import of the passage seems to be the same as when it is said, "The Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes; and the vision of all is become to you as the words of a book that is sealed," xxix. 10, 11. In the days of our Lord, it is introduced as part of their curse—what was then, and what is still the root of all their evils—that the testimony, in so far as they were concerned, was bound up, the law sealed: "It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given."

17, 18. *And I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him. Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me, are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.*

While Isaiah thus predicted and foresaw the evils that awaited the nation on account of their sin, he announces his own resolution. Whatever course his countrymen might follow, and whatever judgments might befall them, he would wait on God, and not like them, depart from him. He would do so especially as occupying with his family a peculiar position towards Israel, and as, in consequence of that position, bound to remain "faithful among the faithless." He lay under special obligation and privilege, as having been selected, with his two sons, Shear-jashub and Mahar-shalal-hash-baz, to be signs to the nation. It is not stated how or when Isaiah, like his sons, was constituted a sign to the nation. His name, however, signifying "the salvation of Jehovah," thus becomes connected with the final salvation of the yet lost house of Israel.

19. *And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep and that mutter; should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?*



The prophet here warns the nation against a vice which doubtless existed in his own day, and still more at future periods of their history, in proportion as ignorance, the mother of superstition, prevailed among them. While they would disregard his voice who was given by God for a sign, they would seek and follow the pretended opinion of the dead. The practice of necromancy, or pretended intercourse with the spirits of the dead, has always been a characteristic of heathen and idolatrous nations. The extent to which this was carried in dark ages is shown in the familiar example of the ancient Sibyl or Sibyls. Although the Jews were prohibited from practising such absurdity, Deut. xviii. 10, 11, or even from countenancing it, Lev. xx. 6, they often conformed in this, as in other respects, to the customs of their idolatrous neighbours. If even Saul was guilty of this sin, when he consulted the woman at Endor, it may be supposed that it prevailed to a large extent among the people. The offensiveness of this vice in the sight of the God of Israel is often asserted, 1 Chron. x. 13; 2 Chron. xxxiii. 6. Its folly is declared by the prophet.—“For the living to the dead,” that is, supplying what is understood, for the benefit of the living, should they apply to the dead? viz., the spirits of the dead who were consulted in necromancy. Of such light it may be said pre-eminently, If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness?

20. *To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them (or, no morning.)*

The only true source of knowledge is here pointed out. To the law and the testimony they should apply. On the man who has not learned to turn to the revealed will of God, light has not so much as dawned.<sup>1</sup> Even under the noon-day of the gospel, the Jews grope in darkness, not discerning the testimony of their own prophets.

<sup>1</sup> Light—שֶׁמֶח, the dawn, the break of day.

21, 22. *And they shall pass through it hardly bestead and hungry : and it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, and look upward. And they shall look unto the earth ; and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish ; and they shall be driven to darkness.*

The hopeless and despairing condition to which the nation would be reduced consequent on their rejection of the law and testimony of God, when God and man would be combined against them, is here depicted ; oppression and famine are predicted as their portion in their own land ; and a worse evil than even these, a heart hardened by judgment : instead of turning to him who smote, they would give way to irritation and blasphemy ; whether they looked heavenward or earthward, they would see themselves enveloped in trouble and darkness. The original is still more expressive of suffering and consternation ; words are piled on words, according to the prophet's custom, to deepen the picture of dismay. Barnes translates, "Lo ! trouble and darkness, gloom, oppression, and deepened darkness." How exactly has the prophetic description been realized by Israel, particularly from the time of their dispersion by the Romans downwards : the smiles of the God of Israel withdrawn, and his curse where before his blessing rested—oppression and famine in their own land—trouble in every quarter of the world where their weary foot hath carried them, or their eye could turn ; and all this judgment unblessed towards taking the veil from their eyes—Christ, their King and God, still rejected, and therefore blasphemed.

## CHAPTER IX.

IN the first part of this chapter, 1-7, the eye of the prophet is directed to the blessedness of Israel when Christ shall reign in righteousness; and in the remainder he returns to the subject of their guilt and their threatened judgments.

1, 2. *Nevertheless, the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun, and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations (or, populous). The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.*

The obscurity of the first of these verses is much removed by a different translation. That of Lowth, which has been adopted with slight variations by succeeding commentators, is as follows:—"There shall not (hereafter) be darkness in the land which was distressed. In the former time he debased the land of Zabulon, and the land of Naphthali; but in the latter time he has made it glorious."<sup>1</sup> The passage thus contains a declaration of Judah's afflicted condition, with a prediction that it would not always continue—that her state of degradation would eventually be exchanged for one of honour. It met a

<sup>1</sup> This translation requires, what is rarely necessary, considerable departure from the ordinary version, but which is quite justified by the original. לָבַדּ, rendered "to afflict lightly," signifies often in Hiphil, the form used in the text, "to esteem lightly," Deut. xxvii. 16.—Ges. גָּבַדּ, rendered "did more grievously afflict," signifies in Hiphil, "to make heavy," and also "to make to be honoured."

partial application when Christ, "leaving Nazareth, came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea-coast of Zabulon and Nephthalim, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet," Matt. iv. 13. In this prediction a part of the land, the district of Zabulon, the most oppressed and degraded part of it, because most remote from the capital—the most exposed to the incursions of enemies, and so forth—a part whose inferiority to the rest had become proverbial, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" "Search and look, for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." This part, the most fitting symbol of degradation, is taken to represent the whole of the land which walked in darkness, thus denoting more significantly than if the whole land had been named, the state of desolation to which it would be reduced. And, in like manner, this district alone, where our Lord chiefly resided—which was more favoured by his presence than any other spot—to which almost all his preaching was confined, is said to see a great light (2), to have the light shining on it—this part representing the whole; but the selection of this the most darkened spot—the promise of light even here—indicating how great the blessings were which should flow to the whole land from the presence of the Messiah. But the passage may bear a yet prospective meaning; much of what follows must be so understood. Its import is not exhausted by anything that has yet occurred in Judea. The light shone there, but the darkness comprehended it not. It cannot be said that the people have seen a great light. It is more characteristic of the nation than ever that they walk in darkness. As a nation they will return to their own land unbelievers in the Messiah. See xi. 11. It will be true then that they dwell in the land of the shadow of death; and in a sense never yet fulfilled, when the veil shall be taken from their eyes, they shall see a great light, upon them shall the light shine, in that day when their light



shall be come, and the glory of the Lord shall have risen upon them, ix. 1. The succeeding context requires the adoption of this view.

3. *Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy (or, to him): they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.*

The period referred to will be one of prosperity and joy. This was not the case, in the full signification of the text, when He who is the light of the world appeared in Judea in the days of his humiliation. Instead of a multiplying of the nation, it was foretold that of the very temple there should not be left one stone upon another; instead of an increase of the joy,<sup>1</sup> there was to be great tribulation; instead of the injunction to rejoice, as at the close of the harvest, or of the battle, at the dividing of the spoil, it was said, weep for yourselves and for your children. But it will be otherwise when the day of Israel's coming prosperity shall have dawned. Then "they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord; and their soul shall be as a watered garden, and they shall not sorrow any more at all," Jer. xxxi. 12. So much will the nation be multiplied, that it is foretold, "the children shall say, the place is too strait for me, give place to me that I may dwell," xlix. 20; and "place shall not be found for them," Zech. x. 10.

4. *For thou hast broken (or, when thou brakest) the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian.*

The prosperity and happiness which awaited the Jewish nation, would follow their deliverance from the hands of their enemies. The various symbols of oppression and

<sup>1</sup> "Not increased the joy." In many MSS. the reading is יָלַד, "to it," instead of אֵל, "not," both having the same pronunciation in Hebrew. The former, which is adopted generally by recent expositors, seems required by the context.

servitude—the yoke, the staff,<sup>1</sup> the rod—are said to be, not lightened, not removed, to be replaced again, but broken, signifying complete and final deliverance. This has never been the case at any period in Jewish history subsequent to the coming of Christ. The prophecy is, therefore, still prospective. As if this language were not sufficiently descriptive of what awaits the Jewish people, it is illustrated by a reference to one of the most remarkable deliverances in the annals of their nation—that experienced by them under Gideon against the Midianites, Judges vii. They will resemble each other peculiarly in this, that both will be signally the doing of the Lord. “The sword of the Lord” will be again the war-cry. “The Lord shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem.” He will be “the strength of the children of Israel,” Joel iii. 16.

5. *For every battle of the warrior is (or, when the whole battle of the warrior was) with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be (or, and it was) with burning and fuel (or, meat) of fire.*

The translation of this verse is attended with no small difficulty. The following is the exposition usually preferred, as given by Lowth:—“For the greaves<sup>2</sup> of the armed warrior in the conflict, and the garment rolled in much blood, shall be for a burning, even fuel for the fire.” So utter will be the final overthrow of the enemies of Israel, that their very arms will be made fuel for the fire. The Lord will yet gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle, Zech. xiv. He will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people; and in regard to the destruction which will then overtake her enemies, their armour shall be for burning. So it is written in a kindred

<sup>1</sup> “Staff.” The meaning of this expression is doubtful. Rosenmüller considers it to refer to a custom of having a piece of wood fixed on the shoulders of slaves.

<sup>2</sup> *ḡḡḡ*, translated “battle,” is rendered “greaves” by Gesenius, and may be regarded, by synecdoche, as implying the whole armour.

passage in Ezek. xxxix. 9: "And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and the bucklers, the bows and the arrows, and the handstaves and the spears, and they shall burn with fire seven years; they shall burn the weapons with fire, and they shall spoil those that spoiled them, and rob those that robbed them, saith the Lord." So in the 46th Psalm, after a prophetic description of the previous events—the manifestation of God in Jerusalem, and the deliverance vouchsafed to her (5)—the fury of her enemies—the convulsions of nature which shall accompany his appearing (6), and the judgments on ungodly nations (8), it is added, "He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire." Then "he will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off," Zech. ix. 10.

6, 7. *For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God (or, El Gibbor), The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.*

These verses, which describe the cause of Judah's joy and deliverance, are usually understood of our Lord's appearing in the flesh, but their contextual connexion places them in another light. The Jewish nation never did take into their lips the language here ascribed to them, but it will be their song at the period indicated. While the first two particulars in the description apply to what is past, the rest apply, with much greater propriety, to the time when Christ shall be seated on a throne, not lying in a manger. For example, the clause, "The government shall be upon his shoulder," although descriptive of

his government of his Church, yet possesses much more significancy when understood of what is still future. It was not when he lay in Bethlehem—it was not until he was risen, and his work was done, that he could say, That *all* power in heaven and in earth was given unto him. Even then he did not exercise it. Satan is still by sufferance the god of this world. But the time is coming when there shall be no exception to the universality of his rule, even in one corner of his dominion, even among one handful of created beings; when, not as now, there shall be no government but his own; when all government shall be upon his shoulder. Neither is he now, in the fullest sense, the Prince of Peace. He has not yet extinguished sin, he has not yet thereby established universal peace. He came to this world to send not peace but a sword: but when the government shall be upon his shoulder he shall reveal himself as the Prince of Peace. But the conclusion of this description determines still more the time of its full application to Christ to be yet future. The covenant with David contained the promise that his throne should be built up to all generations. At the birth of Christ that throne—the throne of Judah—was not occupied by him; it was only foretold by the angel, “the Lord shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever,” Luke i. 32. And it is evidently to the period of the fulfilment of this promise that the language of Isaiah points. It is the zeal of him who hath said in regard to this very matter, “my covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips,” that shall do this.

8. *The Lord sent a word into Jacob, and it hath lighted upon Israel.*

The eye of the prophet, which had ranged so far into futurity, is now withdrawn from the glorious object of Christ's reign in righteousness and peace, to contemplate



the guilt of Israel. The subjects of the remainder of the chapter are what, it might be expected, would often be presented to the notice of the nation through the prophet, viz., the different particulars of their sin, and the judgments pronounced against it. In this verse it is announced that their sinning was not in ignorance, nor would their punishment be without warning; for the Lord had sent a word or message to them. By Isaiah and others had he pleaded with them. There is here a singular and perplexing antithesis between the common names of the ten tribes, Jacob and Israel. As the other names by which they are known in Scripture also occur in the following verse, viz., Ephraim, the chief of the ten tribes, and Samaria, their capital, the object of such repetition may have been to fix attention to the subject of the vision, as relating to Israel in distinction from Judah.

9, 10. *And all the people shall know, even Ephraim, and the inhabitants of Samaria, that say in the pride and stoutness of heart, The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones; the sycamores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars.*

Although the nation had been well warned by Moses, and other servants of God, of the consequences of sin, so far from turning at their reproofs, they had continued stout-hearted; and when by the invasions of enemies God destroyed their buildings of brick and sycamores, instead of turning to him who smote them, their language is said to be, Though these buildings are gone, we will raise better of stone and cedar.

11, 12. *Therefore the Lord shall set up the adversaries of Rezin against him, and join (or, mingle) his enemies together; the Syrians before, and the Philistines behind; and they shall devour Israel with open (or, with whole) mouth. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.*

The nation is here warned, that fresh sin would only lead to fresh judgments. They would be delivered into the hands of the adversaries of Rezin, king of Syria, viz.,

the Assyrians, by whom Rezin was slain, and by whom Israel was afterwards reduced to the condition of an Assyrian province, and was, as it were, devoured ; and to the Syrians and Philistines, two neighbouring powers, who may have formed part of the Assyrian army, as some think, or who may have combined and attacked Israel subsequently to this prediction, a very probable occurrence, although not recorded in sacred history. But these threats also proving ineffectual, the anger of the Lord is not turned away, but his hand is said to be still stretched out in judgment.

13-15. *For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of hosts ; therefore the Lord will cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and rush, in one day. The ancient and honourable, he is the head ; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail.*

In these verses there is a second declaration of the sin and judgment of the nation. This chapter, from the 8th verse, and the beginning of the following chapter, presents a striking illustration of the Hebrew parallelism. In the 9th and 10th verses, in the 13th, in the 16th, in the 18th, and in the 1st and 2d of chapter x., there is portrayed, under different aspects, the sin of the nation ; while in the 11th and 12th verses, in the 14th and 15th, in the 17th, in 18-21, and in the 3d and 4th of chapter x., the judgments of the nation for that sin are foretold ; the parallelism closing in three of the divisions, in verses 12, 17, and 21, with the declaration that their judgments would be yet longer protracted.

In the first division of the parallelism, the continued impenitence of the nation, even when pled with by judgment, is represented as the cause of increased calamity. Their punishment would extend to all classes (14, 15) ; it would be inflicted indiscriminately on the most degraded and most honoured of the nation. This is expressed by two figures taken from the animal and vegetable king-

doms. From the head to the tail of the animal includes all of it ; and the branch—here the branch of the palm-tree, which grows only on the top, and at a great height—and the lowly rush or reed, comprehend the two extremes of what is noblest and lowest among vegetable productions. In other cases of national suffering, the poor often escape from their obscurity, and the rich and noble from their influence ; but the case of Israel has been an exception to this rule. No degradation has shielded the poor Israelite from insult, and no station has saved the rich from extortion.

16, 17. *For the leaders of this people (or, they that call them blessed) cause them to err : and they that are led of them (or, they that are called blessed of them) are destroyed (or, swallowed up). Therefore the Lord shall have no joy in their young men, neither shall have mercy on their fatherless and widows ; for every one is an hypocrite and an evil-doer, and every mouth speaketh folly (or, villany). For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.*

Here the sin of their leaders is adduced as a cause of the nation's judgments. The depravity of rulers is a sure sign of general corruption among the people. Hence it is added, "Every one is a hypocrite and an evil-doer, and every mouth speaketh folly." The corruption of her chief men is often made a subject of complaint against Israel. (See i. 23.) In consequence of this universal alienation from God, it is declared, as a sign of his utter alienation from them, and of the extent to which his judgments would be carried, that their young men, and even the fatherless and widows, who in other circumstances are the special subjects of God's regard and keeping, would cease to move his compassion. And how much has the merciful character of God appeared changed and reversed in his dealings with the children of Abraham.

18-21. *For wickedness burneth as the fire : it shall devour the briers and thorns, and shall kindle in the thickets of the forest ; and they shall mount up like the lifting up of smoke. Through the wrath of the Lord of hosts is the land darkened, and the people shall be as the*

*fuel (or, meat) of the fire: no man shall spare his brother. And he shall snatch (or, cut) on the right hand, and be hungry; and he shall eat on the left hand, and they shall not be satisfied: they shall eat every man the flesh of his own arm: Manasseh, Ephraim; and Ephraim, Manasseh: and they together shall be against Judah. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.*

The wickedness of the nation is described in the first of these verses by the comparison of a raging fire, devouring first the shrubs, then extending to the lofty trees of the forest, and sending up a vast volume of smoke. So had iniquity spread itself in Israel, until all classes had become corrupt, and their cry, like that of the antediluvian world, had gone up before God. But in proportion to their guilt should be its punishment. The indignation of God against them would also burn like a fire. Civil war (18) and famine (19) would swell the catalogue of the nation's miseries. No bond of relationship would be any protection against mutual injury. Manasseh and Ephraim, the two most closely connected of the tribes, and representing here the whole ten tribes, would destroy each other, and all together would be against the two tribes of Judah.

Of the history of the ten tribes subsequent to the uttering of these predictions, very little is known—there is no record of their condition from which to compare the prophecy with its fulfilment. Similar denunciations were uttered against Judah for similar sins; and in the more full history of those two tribes which has been left, all that was threatened of removal from their own land—of mercy denied to the fatherless and the widow—of civil war—of famine—all has been executed to the letter against her, and no doubt has been as literally against her sister Israel, had the same means of testing it been in our hands. All that is related of her after history coincides with what is here foretold; and the uncertainty and gloom in which her fate is enwrapped, leave on the mind a deeper impression of the bitterness of her cup of judgment, than



if her fate had been matter of history. "The Lord was very angry with Israel," it is written, "and removed them out of his sight. The Lord rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until he had cast them out of his sight," 2 Kings 17, 18, 20. In regard to the last of the evils predicted of them, viz., the mutual variance of the tribes, and their common hostility towards Judah, although these are not recorded at any length, yet how likely was such to be the case, since there were so many examples of this in their previous history; so that it is remarked by Vitringa, that after the time of Jeroboam the Second, Pekahiah was the only king who reached the throne without treachery or blood; and Judah, from the day of their separation, was the object of constant hatred, and when their own strifes permitted it, of invasion and war.

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## CHAPTER X.

1, 2. *Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that (or, to the writers that) write grievousness which they have prescribed; to turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless!*

CONTINUING the subject of the previous chapter, the prophet proceeds to point out a fruitful cause of Israel's judgments, viz., the iniquities of the lawgivers, whom at the same time he solemnly warns. Their crimes, from the frequent references made to them (see chap. i. 23), appear to have been peculiarly aggravated. They are charged with decreeing unrighteous decrees; they prospered by injustice done to the poor, the widows, the fatherless. They were those whom our Lord condemns as laying

heavy burdens on other men's shoulders, which they themselves would not touch with one of their fingers ; who devoured widows' houses. The circumstance that justice was thus perverted, and its fountain poisoned, speaks volumes as to the very degraded condition of the nation.

3, 4. *And what will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which shall come from far ? to whom will ye flee for help ? and where will ye leave your glory ? Without me they shall bow down under the prisoners, and they shall fall under the slain. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.*

Guilty as the class referred to was, still the language of God to them, through the prophet, is not so much that of threatening as of remonstrance : " What will ye do in the day of visitation ? " But at the same time the issue of so wicked a course is declared : The day of visitation and desolation would surely come. If they continued without God, they would be numbered among the prisoners and the slain (4). But not even by all these judgments is the anger of God represented as being stayed. They have all been inflicted on Israel ; but against her the hand of the Lord is still stretched out. The predictions in these verses were fulfilled in the victories of their enemies over Israel, as that of the Assyrians under Tiglath-pileser, 2 Kings xv.—The expression " glory," as it is used in Scripture, bears a variety of significations. Some understand it here of wealth, others of the princes of the people.

5. *O (or, woe to the) Assyrian (or, Asshur), the rod of mine anger, and (or, though) the staff in their hand is mine indignation.*

The vision now proceeds to describe the fate of Assyria, which was to be the instrument in the hand of God of punishing Judah. It is all but agreed among commentators that this passage applies to Sennacherib's invasion of Judea, and much of the language corresponds with that application of it. There is, however, much difficulty in ascertaining what refers to the past history of Assyria,

and what may refer to judgments still awaiting that country from a yet future oppression of the ancient people of God. In the 6th verse, the Assyrian is represented as having given him a commission to take the spoil, to take the prey, to tread down his enemies as the mire of the streets; but nothing of the sort was effected by Sennacherib, for he left Jerusalem untouched. It is said also, in the 12th verse, "When the Lord shall have performed *his whole work* upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the stout heart of the king of Assyria;" but the expression, "his whole work," cannot be applied to anything transacted yet, much less to anything that occurred previous to the downfall of the ancient kingdom of Assyria. His whole work upon mount Zion is not yet done. The prediction, in verses 20-23, also corresponds much more with other prophecies, yet unfulfilled, than with any past period of the nation's history. In other passages we find Assyria and its judgments associated with a yet future day in the history of the Jewish nation. Thus, in Micah v. 6, 7, we read in connexion with events yet to come, "They shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in the entrances thereof: thus shall he deliver us from the Assyrians; and the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as dew from the Lord." And to the same effect, and in a similar connexion, it is written in Zech. x. 10, 11, "I will bring them *again also* out of the land of Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria; and I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon; and the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt shall depart away." There are also many descriptions of the last enemies of Israel, to which she is to be as a fire in the midst of a sheaf, which correspond with the geographical position of Assyria. While, therefore, the incidents in this chapter can be applied yet only to the past history of that kingdom, it has to be borne in mind that

partially, or wholly, they may receive, with other similar predictions, a more striking fulfilment in events which yet lie hid in the womb of time. The word translated in our version "O," is generally rendered by critics "woe," its signification in various other places.

6. *I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down (or, to lay them a treading) like the mire of the streets.*

The charge of the Almighty to the Assyrian, whether the monarch, or rather the nation personified, is first stated. The appropriateness of the epithet, "an hypocritical nation," is well known. So characteristic was hypocrisy of the Jews, that it was applied to them by our Lord in his day more frequently than any other.

7-11. *Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few. For he saith, Are not my princes altogether kings? Is not Calno as Carchemish? is not Hamath as Arpad? is not Samaria as Damascus? As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols, and whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and of Samaria; shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols?*

Although chosen for the solemn work of executing God's judgments, the Assyrian is represented as being an unconscious instrument in the Lord's hands—as displaying the demeanour not of an instrument, but the self-confidence, the ambition, the boasting of an independent agent,—as thinking only of the accomplishment of an object of his own. He is described, further, as vaunting of the power of his princes (8), as enumerating the cities he had overthrown (9), and as boasting that what he had done to them he would do to Jerusalem (10, 11). The case presents an instructive illustration of the manner in which God overrules the purposes of the wicked for the promotion of his own.—Hamath and Samaria were



among the most celebrated cities in Syria. If successful against them, what fate might Jerusalem expect? This boastful and insulting language closely resembles that used by Sennacherib, 2 Kings xviii. 34; Is. xxxvi. 19.—The expression “hath found,” implies hath reached and seized.

12. *Wherefore it shall come to pass, that, when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion, and on Jerusalem, I will punish (or, visit upon) the fruit of the stout (or, of the greatness of the) heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks.*

Here a break occurs in the boasting of the Assyrian, and there is introduced a declaration of the punishment of his pride. The interruption is made at a very fitting point, at the moment of his defiance of the God of Judah, when he boasted that what he had done to other kingdoms and their idols, he would do to Jerusalem and *her idols*. How completely the pride of Sennacherib was humbled, and his army all but annihilated, is well known. In one night the angel of the Lord smote 185,000 men in the Assyrian camp, 2 Kings xix. 35.—Of the expression, “the fruit of the stout heart,” Barnes remarks, “Fruit is that which a tree or the ground produces;—here it means that which a proud heart produces or designs, that is, plans of pride and ambition; schemes of conquest and of blood.”

13, 14. *For he saith, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent: and I have removed the bounds of the people, and have robbed their treasures, and I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man (or, like many people). And my hand hath found, as a nest, the riches of the people: and as one gathereth eggs that are left, have I gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped.*

The boasting of the Assyrian is resumed. He is here represented as vaunting, with even increased arrogance, of his power and achievements, as going the length of affirming that he had plundered kingdoms of their treasure, nay, all the earth, as easily and utterly as one robs

a nest of its eggs.—“ I have removed the bounds of the people,” that is, I have changed the boundaries of kingdoms.—“ Peeped,” that is, chirped. The figure of robbing the nest is retained. The expressions, not moving the wing, not opening the mouth, not chirping, which apply to the frightened bird, are descriptive of the alarm and non-resistance of the enemies of the Assyrian.

15-19. *Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith ? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it ? as if the rod should shake itself against (or, as if a rod should shake) them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood (or, that which is not wood). Therefore shall the Lord, the Lord of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness ; and under his glory he shall kindle a burning like the burning of a fire. And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame : and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briers in one day ; and shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field, both soul and body (or, from the soul, and even to the flesh) : and they shall be as when a standard-bearer fainteth. And the rest of the trees of his forest shall be few (or, number), that a child may write them.*

The boasting of the Assyrian is again interrupted ; its emptiness is exposed, and its end foretold. It is said of him, in language which cannot be made more forcible or more simple, that he was but a tool in the hand of God, but as the axe, or the saw, or the rod, or the staff in the hands of those who use them. But his boasting, although vain, was also sinful, and would not pass unpunished. His judgment is expressed by various significant figures. Leanness would be sent on the nation or army (16), reducing their numbers and power ; fire would be applied, as it were, to their glory, consuming it ; the Lord himself would be that flame (17), which he was by his miraculous destruction of them. Before his power the mighty Assyrians, both high and low, would be but as thorns and briers, or the noblest trees of the forest (18), or the richest produce of the fruitful field are, before the devouring flame. Only a mere handful would survive (19), like the

few trees of the forest over which the conflagration has passed. There is a manifest coincidence between what is here represented of the boasting of the Assyrian, and his sudden and complete destruction, and the boasting of Rab-shakeh on the part of Sennacherib before Jerusalem, with the subsequent miraculous overthrow of the Assyrian host, as recorded in 2 Kings xviii. and xix.; and no doubt the description here must be understood as embracing that event. But whether it is exhausted by this application of it, is a question, when it is viewed along with other predictions. Perhaps the most satisfactory explanation of the whole passage is to regard the prophet as passing abruptly, as in other cases, from the circumstances of Sennacherib's invasion, to more distant and yet future scenes in which Assyria is to figure. At all events, the subsequent context seems to require that the main reference of the prophecy is to events not yet come to pass. Its connexion with the following chapter, were it nothing else, is sufficient to determine this.—“Both soul and body,” that is, utterly.—“They shall be as when a standard-bearer fainteth.” Much difference of opinion exists in regard to the interpretation here. It is generally rendered by the more recent expositors, “We shall be like the fainting, or wasting away of a sick man.”—*Alexander*.

20-23. *And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God (or, El Gibbor). For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of (or, in, or, among) them shall return: the consumption decreed shall overflow with (or, in) righteousness. For the Lord God of hosts (or, Adonai Jehovah) shall make a consumption, even determined, in the midst of all the land.*

These verses do not seem applicable to the crisis of the Jewish nation immediately subsequent to the overthrow of the Assyrian army. It cannot be said, for example, in the way that is here done, that the consequence of

their deliverance was, that they no more stayed upon him that smote them, and that the remnant returned unto the mighty God. These predictions harmonize better with others yet unfulfilled. Just as the eye can glance from one point, on a field of vision, to another, however distant, so here, as in many other places, the eye of Isaiah appears to pass from one near point in the prophetic vision to a remote one; he seems led from the contemplation and description of the temporary deliverance wrought for the Jews from Assyria to a mightier deliverance, of which they are yet to be the subjects, one which will be followed by their final turning unto God. The scope of the passage requires this. Part of it is applied by Paul to the future history of Israel, apart altogether from the circumstances of their deliverance from Sennacherib, and in connexion with the final conversion of the nations, Romans ix. 27, 28. In the text they are represented as being oppressed and reduced in numbers previous to that day—as but a remnant. This term would apply to their past condition for many ages. They are now, and have long been, not a whole and united nation, but fragments scattered over the world; but the expression appears to refer to a state of still greater reduction in point of numbers. They are said to be “a very small remnant,” i. 9. “Seven women shall take hold of one man, when the branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious for them that are *escaped* of Israel; and he that is *left* in Zion, and he that *remaineth* in Jerusalem, shall be called holy,” iv. 1-3. “They shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt,” xxvii. 13. “In all the land, (after their national return), saith the Lord, two parts thereof shall be cut off and die; but the third part shall be left therein,” Zech. xiii. 8. These judgments, laid to heart at least, will be followed by the nation’s turning to the Lord: they shall no more stay upon an arm of flesh. So it is written,



that they shall then say, "Asshur (Assyria) shall not save us; neither shall we say any more to the works of our hands, Ye are our gods," Hos. xiv. 3; "Ephraim (Israel) shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? From me (God) is thy fruit found (s);" "It shall come to pass in that day, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, that they shall no more be remembered," Zech. xiii. 2. The return of the nation to God is also connected with a time of consumption or destruction (22, 23). It will be "the great and terrible day of the Lord;" the day when "the slain of the Lord shall be many;" when he "shall be wroth, that he may do his work, his strange work." But that will yet be a consumption in righteousness, a just and righteous destruction of his enemies. "Judgment will he lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet." They that return of Zion shall be "redeemed with righteousness."

24-27. *Therefore thus saith the Lord God of hosts (or, Adonai Jehovah), O my people that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian: he shall smite thee with a rod, and shall lift up his staff against (or, but he shall lift up his staff for) thee, after the manner of Egypt. For yet a very little while, and the indignation shall cease, and mine anger, in their destruction. And the Lord of hosts shall stir up a scourge for him, according to the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb: and as his rod was upon the sea, so shall he lift it up after the manner of Egypt. And it shall come to pass in that day, that his burden shall be taken away (or, shall remove) from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing.*

The remainder of the chapter is partially applicable to the circumstances of the Jews at the invasion of Sennacherib. But it cannot be limited to that event, even if it be allowed that it is included; for he did not smite Judah with the rod, or lift up the staff against her after the manner of Egypt, that is, as was done in Egypt. Judah is encouraged by the assurance that the period of the Assyrian oppression would be but short, and that their destruction would be quick and utter (25), like that

of the Midianites at Oreb, Judges vii., or of the Egyptians at the Red Sea (26). So sudden and complete was the destruction of the Assyrian army; but such also will be the last overthrow of the enemies of Judah, even as that of wood before the fire, or of a sheaf before the torch. In the 4th verse of the previous chapter, the same comparison, as in this 27th verse, is applied to the final deliverance of the Jewish nation.—“Because of the anointing.” No satisfactory explanation of this expression is given by expositors. Does it refer to the peculiar favour and grace of God, which will be vouchsafed to that people when they shall return to the Lord, and the yoke of their oppressors shall be for ever broken? They are known in Scripture as the anointed of God: “Thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou hast been wroth with thine anointed,” Ps. lxxxix. 38. The expression is applied to them in connexion with their restoration at last to the Divine favour. Thus, in the 20th Psalm, verse 6, a prophetic psalm of Israel’s conversion, it is written, “Now know I that the Lord saveth his anointed;” and in the 28th, a psalm referring to the same events, verse 8, we read, “The Lord is their strength, and he is the saving strength of his anointed.” The expression will be peculiarly applicable when there shall be poured on them the spirit of grace and of supplications; when their light shall be come, and the glory of the Lord shall be risen upon them.

28-34. *He is come to Aiath, he is passed to Migron; at Michmash he hath laid up his carriages: they are gone over the passage: they have taken up their lodging at Geba; Ramah is afraid; Gibeah of Saul is fled. Lift up (or, cry shrill with) thy voice, O daughter of Gallim; cause it to be heard unto Laish, O poor Anathoth. Madmenah is removed; the inhabitants of Gebim gather themselves to flee. As yet shall he remain at Nob that day: he shall shake his hand against the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem. Behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, shall lop the bough with terror; and the high ones of stature shall be hewn down, and the haughty shall be humbled. And he shall cut down the thickets of the forests with iron, and Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one (or, mightily).*

In these verses there is drawn a very lively picture of the approach of the Assyrian foe towards Jerusalem. The different cities on their line of march are enumerated, some of which still remain, others have their sites ascertained, and others are unknown. There is no evidence that Sennacherib adopted the route here laid down—another argument against the application of the passage as a whole to his case. The rapidity with which the enemy is seen in the vision passing from point to point in their hurried march, is the chief thing pointed out, along with the consternation produced by their approach, some raising cries of distress (30), others seeking safety in flight (31). At last (32), Nob, which bordered on Jerusalem, is reached by the enemy, where they halt for the remainder of the day, intending on the morrow to seize their prey: they gaze on the devoted city, and threaten its destruction. But their anticipations are doomed to disappointment. Their fate is previously described (17, 18) to be that of the forest before the flame. The figure is resumed (33), and by the prophetic eye of Isaiah the mighty host is seen to fall like the bough of a lofty tree, or like the thickets of the forest before the axe (34). It is against the same class, the high ones, the haughty, that the last national judgments of God are often said to be directed, ii. 12, and in language expressive of the same absolute destruction that they are described, xvii. 13. Of these still future judgments Assyria is often said to be a partaker, xxx. 31; xxxi. 8.—The clause, “Lebanon shall fall mightily” (margin), may be understood either figuratively or literally. The context suggests that Lebanon here is used for Assyria, as in Ezek. xxxi. 3, “Behold the Assyrian was a forest in Lebanon.” The comparison of the previous clause, the cutting down of a forest, is naturally enough enlarged on, and a mountain famed for its trees is specified, and the cutting down of its cedars employed to represent the downfall of Assyria. According to this view, the clause

expresses nothing more than the previous one; or the word may be understood literally, the clause then denoting judgment on this part of the land, as is predicted in other places. "Lebanon is ashamed and hewn down," xxxiii. 9.

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## CHAPTER XI.

WHATEVER difficulty there may be in determining to what extent the previous part of this vision relates to the future, and remains to receive its full accomplishment, there is none as to the application of this chapter. It describes the final establishment of Christ's kingdom on earth. And as the future deliverance of Judah and Israel from their enemies, and the judgments that await them, are in many other parts of Scripture connected, and set side by side with the ultimate reign of Christ over all the earth, the relation of this chapter, whose fulfilment is so clearly future, with the preceding, strengthens the supposition that there may be more in the former waiting another and a more full accomplishment than at first sight appears, or has been generally supposed.

The subjects of the chapter are the character of Christ as king on earth (1-3); the righteousness of his judgments on the wicked (4, 5); the peace of his reign (6-9); the gathering of Israel from all lands, and the aid given for their return (10-16).

This division of the prophecies commences with a reference to the establishment of the kingdom of Christ, chapter vii., and closes with asserting and describing it.

1, 2. *And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord.*



The general subject of the chapter being the reign of Christ over this world, it opens very appropriately with a description of the heavenly king. His descent from David is first asserted, his reign being in fulfilment of the covenant of God with David: "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations," Ps. lxxxix. 3, 4. His descent from that famed king of Israel the New Testament commences with tracing,—“The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David,” Matt. i., and concludes with maintaining,—“I am the root and offspring of David, and the bright and morning star,” Rev. xxii. 16. The glory of David’s race had passed away in the course of ages; there remained, at the period of Christ’s birth, but as it were the decayed stem and roots of the tree, but from these Christ sprung like a shoot<sup>1</sup> or branch. His character and qualifications for government are summed up in this, That He to whom God giveth not the Spirit by measure, would have the Spirit of God resting upon him. Those gifts of the Spirit are chiefly named which would fit for ruling righteously. The king who shall reign in righteousness is described as possessed of understanding to know what is right, of might to execute it, and of the fear of God, consecrating all to him for whose glory he hath undertaken the recovery of the world.

3-5. *And shall make him of quick understanding (or, scent, or, smell) in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove (or, argue) with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.*

The description of his government naturally succeeds

<sup>1</sup> “A rod.” The word occurs elsewhere only in Prov. xiv. 3. It evidently signifies “a shoot.”

the description of the king. It is both negative and positive. His decisions, unlike those of other judges, which are therefore fallible, will not be dependent on the testimony of the bodily senses. He will judge, but his judgment will be righteous. There will be deliverance to the poor and meek from that oppression on which Isaiah so often dwells as one of the curses of the Jewish nation, and which history so corroborates. Similar language occurs in another prediction, whose fulfilment is shown from the context to be still future. "Lebanon," now withering away, "shall be turned into a fruitful field.... In that day the meek shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel," xxix. 17, 19. Then when the kingdom of righteousness shall be established, those promises made on the Mount of Olives shall have their full fulfilment: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth," or, the land. And in reference to the same period it is written of the same class, "Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth; it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger," Zeph. ii. 3. There are two places where the Lord is said to dwell, where he has his throne and his home: "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit," lvii. 15, comp. lxvi. 12. But the same period, it is added, will be one of judgment to the wicked. Of them it is predicted in Rev. xix. 15, in reference also to the same yet future time, "Out of his mouth," the mouth of him who says and it is done, "goeth a sharp two-edged sword,"—"with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips, shall he slay the wicked,"—with it he "shall smite the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." But notwithstanding the judgments which are to usher in the reign of Christ on earth, when

he shall take unto him, not his great love or grace, but his great *power* and reign, yet all will be done in righteousness and faithfulness. (See i. 25.) With these he will be girt about as with a girdle—an inseparable and distinguishing part of Eastern dress, indicative of the certainty and prominence of righteousness in the proceedings of the Messiah. Similarly, he who was seen by John sitting on the white horse, was called “faithful and true, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.” It will not be necessary for the confusion of those who hate him, that he reign as an avenger; it will be enough, both for his enemies and his children, that he be girt with faithfulness; that he be true to his threatenings as he will be to his promises.

6-9. *The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’ (or, adder’s) den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.*

After the prophetic description of the king and his government, there follows another of the condition of his kingdom. It will be one of peace, the sure sequel and twin companion of righteousness. Animals which are the natural enemies of each other, are seen by the eye of the prophet living, even feeding, in harmony; and the most venomous reptiles appear harmless. The state of things represented by some of the expressions used here, might be regarded as descriptive of the period when “the creature which now groans and travels in pain, shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption,” Rom. viii. 19. When God “shall make with them a covenant of peace, and the evil beast shall cease out of the land, and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the

woods," Ezek. xxxiv. 25. When he will make "a covenant for Israel with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the earth," Hos. ii. 18. But whether any, even the least extreme, of these expressions shall be realized literally or not, there are others, such as that of the lion eating straw like the ox, becoming from a carnivorous a herbaceous animal—experiencing a change not only of its habits, but of its animal constitution, which there is no warrant for expecting. Another truth, however, may be conveyed by the passage, viz., the incomprehensibility by man now, of much that will be manifested in the new earth, or particularly of the peace which will be then enjoyed. That peace is represented by an inconceivable figure, because itself inconceivable. Were the kingdom of righteousness, as one conceives of it, to be intelligible and simple in all its parts, then clearly it would not be the one revealed and promised in Scripture; for one characteristic of that kingdom, one as real and sure as its righteousness or its peace or any other, is its incomprehensibility in many particulars by man: for "eye hath not seen, neither hath ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." While the passage is thus in so far understood figuratively, its literality is at the same time in a manner preserved. There were inconceivable things revealed to the eye of the prophet, and his view of the reign of Christ on earth would not have been complete without them. That the period of the ultimate triumph of truth and righteousness in the world is the time referred to, is evident from the context. It will be the time when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as completely as the waters of the sea cover every spot of their bed.

10. *And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious (or, glory).*



The general account of the nature of Messiah's reign is followed in the remainder of the chapter by the relation of some details, particularly of what he will effect in behalf of his ancient people. The first clauses of this verse declare that to him the Gentile nations will gather, as men flock around the standard. The same figure is often employed in other places, see v. 26. Generally it is not said what the standard is. Here it is said to be Christ himself who will be the attraction which will draw all flesh.—The "rest" of Christ is his place of rest, or the holy mountain of the preceding verse, Mount Zion, the place where he will stand for a signal to the people. Other passages foretell with equal clearness the glory of Christ's resting-place when he shall reign on earth: "When the Lord shall build up Zion he shall appear in his glory," Ps. cii. 16; "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, yet once it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens and the earth, and the sea and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory," Haggai ii. 6-9; "I will make the place of my feet glorious.... The Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory," lx. 13, 19; "I will gather all nations and tongues, and they shall come and see my glory," lxvi. 18. The natural impression made by such language is, that there will be some place, and that Zion, in the midst of Israel, where Christ will manifest his glory in a peculiar degree. The glory of his resting-place, when he shall reign on earth, is, however, one of the secret things which belong unto the Lord—one of the many things which it has not entered into the heart of man to conceive, which are left unrevealed, perhaps, because incomprehensible; and no more can be known of this glory than what Scripture unfolds. Of it, however, there have been manifestations upon this earth already, as, for example, in the appearance of the Lord to Ezekiel, when "the glory of the God of Israel

came from the way of the east, and came into the house ; and behold the glory of the Lord filled the house ;” or when he was seen in his glorious body on the mount of transfiguration, when “his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light”—a manifestation of it which appears from the preceding context to be given as a symbol of what the Son of man will be when he shall come in his kingdom. And so on the mount again, the Mount Zion which he loves, will he manifest his glory in a way becoming his dignity as king over all the earth. If the historical part of these passages be understood literally, why should not also the prophetic part of them ? If there have been on earth such manifestations of the glory of Christ before, why should there not be again ? With what depth of feeling and elegance of language is the rest of Christ on earth referred to. “The Lord hath chosen Zion, he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever ; here will I dwell, for I have desired it. There will I make the horn of David”—in the text, the root of Jesse, the Messiah—“to bud. I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed ; upon himself shall his crown flourish,” Ps. cxxxii. 13, 14, 17.

11, 12. *And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners (or, wings) of the earth.*

These verses foretell the return of the twelve tribes to their own land. It is, however, their recovery *a second time*—the recovery of *a remnant*—of a part *which has been left*, which is here predicted.<sup>1</sup> This implies a previous

<sup>1</sup> Considerable difference of opinion has existed in regard to some of the countries enumerated here. Probably Pathros is Upper Egypt ; Cush, Ethiopia ; Shinar, Babylonia ; Elam, Elymais—a province of Persia, repre-

return of the nation to their country, viz., their national return in an unconverted state. That such will be the case is not only often implied, but directly taught in Scripture: "Because ye (the house of Israel) are all become dross, behold, therefore I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. . . . Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof," Ezek. xxii. 19-21; "When I have brought them again from the people, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations, then shall they know that I am the Lord their God," Ezek. xxxix. 27, 28. In order to reconcile the various predictions bearing on their future return, it is necessary to keep in view the point that a twofold return is referred to in Scripture. At the present day, more wonderful, at least more unlikely, national movements are occurring, than the repossession of Judea by the Jews, and their national recognition by the powers of Europe. This would form their merely national return, and were it to occur at the present day, it is manifest that it would not embrace every individual of the nation. Local attachments in some shape or other would, it is evident, retain many in the lands of their adoption. There would remain the material of a second return; and the magnet which will attract this remnant will be the cry, not of Israel restored, but of Israel converted—not of Israel returned to their land, but of Israel returned to their Lord. Antecedent to the times of peace pictured in the previous verses, there is foretold a season of great trouble: "Prepare war; wake up the mighty men." It is against Jerusalem that that hostility is to be directed. "They shall be in the siege both against Judah and Jerusalem." Prior to that period, therefore, the Jews must be returned to their own land.

senting the whole kingdom; Hamath, a city on the Orontes in the north of Syria. The expression, "islands—יַמַּיִם—of the sea," denotes sea-coast generally, or maritime countries.

This is their first, their national return. Then, however, their judgments are not to cease: "The land shall be desolate, because of them that dwell therein for the fruit of their doings," Micah vii. 13; "I will bring them again into their land that I gave unto their fathers; and first, I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double, because they have defiled my land," Jer. xvi. 15, 18. By their judgments then, their conversion will be effected: "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi—then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord," Mal. iii. 3, 4. Then it will be that the remnant, left after the general return, will be recovered, both of the outcasts of Israel who are now lost sight of (12), and of the dispersed of Judah who are scattered among all nations, from the four corners of the earth.

13. *The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim.*

The variances between Judah and Israel shall then be healed. Their old jealousies and animosities, which shall have died away during their long separation and afflicted condition, shall never be resumed: "In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel," Jer. iii. 18; "I will take the two sticks, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand....they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two nations any more at all," Ezek. xxxvii. 19, 22.

14. *But they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines toward the west; they shall spoil them (or, the children) of the east together: they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab (or, Edom and Moab shall be the laying on of their hand); and the children of Ammon shall obey them (or, their obedience).*

Then also shall be a season of retribution to their enemies—to the Philistines on the west of their land, and to Edom, Moab, and the children of Ammon on the



east.<sup>1</sup> "They shall spoil those that spoiled them, and rob those that robbed them," Ezek. xxxix. 10; "Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence against the children of Judah," Joel iii. 19. In another prediction referring to an earlier period, these nations on the east of Judea are expressly exempted from judgment at the hands of another power: "He (the king of the north) shall enter into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown, but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief (part) of the children of Ammon," Dan. xi. 41. The prediction was verified when these districts alone of all Syria escaped the invasion of the Turks. They are still described as being under Arab rule, and as altogether independent of the Porte. But those who have yielded to none else are to obey Judah and Ephraim.

15, 16. *And the Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dry-shod (or, in shoes). And there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.*

So sure is the final return of Israel to their country, that miraculous agency will again be exercised on their behalf, as signally as was the case in their passage through the Red Sea under Moses.<sup>2</sup> While the fact of miraculous interference is clearly asserted, the particulars of it are not developed, and the scriptural rule in such cases is, though it tarry, wait for it. But of the fact itself there can be no doubt. "Awake, O arm of the Lord, art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hast made the depths of the sea a way for the

<sup>1</sup> "They shall fly," that is, as a bird. "Upon the shoulders," or borders, from כֶּהָרִים—1. The shoulder; 2. The side of anything, of a city or country. —Ges.

<sup>2</sup> וְהָרַחֵק לְשִׁבְעָה נְחָלִים— "shall smite it in the seven streams," may be translated, "shall smite it into seven streams."

ransomed to pass over? Therefore the redeemed of the Lord (in reference to Israel) shall return," li. 9-11. "I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria; and he shall pass through the sea with affliction, and shall smite the waves in the sea, and all the deeps of the river shall dry up," Zech. x. 11.—By "the tongue of the Egyptian sea" is meant apparently the north-western extreme of the Red Sea.—By "the river" is generally denoted the Euphrates.

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## CHAPTER XII.

THIS chapter forms a song of praise put into the lips of Judah and Israel, when they shall have turned to their Saviour and King. It forms the winding up of that prophetic vision which begins with the seventh chapter—the last and appropriate act of the drama of Israel's past and future history. There are several such songs put into the lips of that nation when returned to their land and to their God, both in Isaiah and in the other prophets, especially in the book of Psalms. Other of the parallel songs in this book are found in chapters xiv. 4, &c.; xxv. 1, &c.; xxvi. 1, &c. How important a place praise will occupy in the spiritual services of Israel and of the world at last, is often indicated. The subjects of prayer, which in the spiritual world will cease—"In that day ye shall ask me nothing"—will be diminished in the new earth. The prayer, "Thy kingdom come," will then be, "Now is come salvation." But the subjects of praise will be augmented, not diminished. In Psalms lxviii. 25, and lxxxvii. 7, both of which refer to the time when the glorious things spoken of Jerusalem, the city of God, will be realized, the presence of "singers and players on instruments" is espe-

cially foretold. In the second of these psalms, the only part of the old temple service that is represented as seen in the service of converted Israel is that of praise. The office of the priests, as the expounders of Scripture, is not represented. "Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion;" "They shall be still praising thee;" "His praise endureth for ever." On one occasion, when parting with the Jewish multitude after complaining of their indifference toward him, and warning them of coming desolation, our Lord hinted to them, in mysterious words, that, in altered circumstances, he would appear again. Addressing himself to Jerusalem, he said, "I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth until ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!" Is it not the same period which is pointed to by the prophet when he writes of Jerusalem, "In that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee. Behold, God is my salvation." There are many allusions to the songs of Israel when her dark night shall have passed away: "The redeemed of the Lord shall come with singing unto Zion," li. 11; "They shall come and sing in the height of Zion," Jer. xxxi. 12; "Again there shall be heard in this place, even in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of them that shall say, Praise the Lord of hosts, for the Lord is good, for his mercy endureth for ever," Jer. xxxiii. 10, 11. And how suitable will be such a song as that of this chapter, from the lips of such a people, saved from such calamities, settled in such a land, and exalted by such privileges. The passage so understood is clear as light.

1. *And in that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me.*

What simplicity, and yet what meaning, in the opening language of the song, which describes the removal of their curse: "Thou wast angry with me, but thine anger is

turned away." And if such woes have resulted to Israel from the anger of the Lord, how great will be her blessings when he shall comfort her ; how much ground for praise ? With equal simplicity, it is said in Hosea, in reference to their final prosperity, " I will heal their backsliding ; I will love them freely, for mine anger is turned away from him," xiv. 4.

2. *Behold, God (or, El) is my salvation ; I will trust, and not be afraid : for the Lord (or, Jah) Jehovah is my strength and my song ; he also is become my salvation.*

The nation, now returned to God, shews the warmth of a first love—the kindness of the saints' youth—the love of espousals. The same spirit is described as then characterizing them, by Hosea : " We will not say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods ;" " Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols ?" Part of this song of converted Israel, as it occurs here, and in the 118th Psalm, is also the song of Moses as given in the 15th chapter of Exodus. It is the song, too, of the saints in glory, as they stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God, Rev. xv. In each of these cases the same language expresses similar deliverances ; it is the same song set to new music. In the case of Moses, the key-note is Israel's deliverance from Pharaoh ; in the next case, it is the ultimate deliverance of Israel from their enemies ; and in the other, it is the deliverance of the saints for ever from all trial, and all temptation, and all sin.

3. *Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.*

The song of praise is here interrupted, and the language assumes the usual prophetic shape. The invitation so long addressed to Israel, " Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters," shall then at last be heard. The verse describes, under familiar scriptural metaphor, their



cordial and joyful acceptance of that gospel which they have so long refused.

4-6. *And in that day shall ye say, Praise the Lord, call upon (or, proclaim) his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. Sing unto the Lord ; for he hath done excellent things : this is known in all the earth. Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant (or, inhabitress) of Zion : for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.*

The praises of the nation are represented, according to the frequent style of Scripture, by the reiteration of parallel expressions, indicative of heartfelt and earnest praise. They are described as being not slow to proclaim the honour of their king, as eager in exciting each other to mutual adoration. The picture drawn of their worship suggests a resemblance to that of David, which rendered him vile in the eyes of Michal, but which he found so joyful that, for the sake of it, he was contented to be counted "more vile;" it suggests a resemblance to the condition of the disciples on the day of Pentecost, which appeared intoxication in the eyes of the blinded Jews.—The clause "Make mention that his name is exalted," points to the day when "the Lord alone shall be exalted."—"He hath done excellent things," is, in the 126th Psalm, "the Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad."—"This is known in all the earth," corresponds with what is written in the same Psalm, "Then said they among the heathen, the Lord hath done great things for them." The impulse which stirs up to such devotion, is the presence of the Holy One of Israel in the midst of them, when "the Redeemer shall come to Zion."

Not a few of the prophetic Psalms of David—the songs of the singer of Israel—are the parallel of this song of praise. Much light is let in upon them when they are viewed in connexion with the circumstances of Israel's final establishment in righteousness in their own land. Glance, for example, at the 118th, Israel is first invoked

to join in thanksgiving after her trials and sorrows are over: "Let Israel *now* say" (2). Then the house of Aaron (3), who still remain distinct from the other tribes: ("I will also take of them for priests and for Levites.") Then they that fear the Lord (4): ("In that place the Lord shall make a feast of fat things for all nations.") The song then rehearses their dangers and deliverances from the nations gathered together against Jerusalem. They had been in distress, they had been compassed about, and so forth (5, 10); but the Lord is now on the side of Israel; their enemies are quenched as the fire of thorns (12); therefore the Lord is made their song (14), and the voice of rejoicing is heard in their tabernacles (15). They had made a narrow escape from utter destruction, but though sore chastened, they had not perished (18): ("I will correct thee in measure, yet will I not make a full end of thee.") Then Jerusalem is a city of righteousness (19): ("Then shall Jerusalem be holy.") Then he whom the Jews—now at last the builders—rejected, is made by those who rejected him, the head of the corner—the strength and ornament of the kingdom of righteousness: ("My servant David a prince among them.") How truly, then, will the dealings of the Lord with Israel, when thus restored and blessed, be marvellous doings (23). That day will be one of rejoicing and prosperity to Israel (24): ("All nations shall call you blessed, for ye shall be a delightful land.") Then the song, of which Christ warned Jerusalem, that he should not be seen again until it should be sung in her streets, shall be heard (26), and she shall be a blessing to all other lands: ("I will make them, and the places about my hill, a blessing.") Then there shall be no longer cause for the complaint, "Ye have robbed me in tithes and offerings;" but they will all be brought into the storehouse (27).

It may seem enough to understand this song as composed in reference to some of the trials of David, such as

his expulsion from Jerusalem and the temple by Absalom, and that the incidents of the psalm suit the circumstances of his return after a temporary banishment. But there are many difficulties in the way of its application to David's position. There is a general harmony between the outline of the psalm and of this chapter of Isaiah which has no connexion with David's case. But passing by this, there is much in the psalm utterly inapplicable to his circumstances. To what event, for example, could he refer, when it is said, "All nations compassed me about?" Again, the stone which the builders rejected was not become, in David's time, the head of the corner. Christ, the blessed one who cometh in the name of the Lord, had not then appeared. But what more likely, on the other hand, than that David, like Isaiah, should pen prophetic songs, intended to celebrate the praises of the Son of David, when he should reign on earth in righteousness? Why the passage is not to be understood of that outlet for all difficulties, and appropriator of all blessings, the Church, has been already noticed.—See Preface.

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The prophecies contained in the eleven following chapters (xiii.-xxiii.), refer no longer to Judah or Israel, but to the surrounding countries or cities of Babylon, Moab, Damascus, Egypt, Tyre, and others. There is in this a seeming departure from the express subject of the book, which is said to be "Judah and Jerusalem," i. 1. But the incongruity is only apparent, not real. No historical narrative is limited to the circumstances of the nation, which is the particular subject of description; in order to its history being complete, it is necessary to enter more or less minutely into that of the co-existent kingdoms, with whose history its own is in a measure interwoven. Much—the larger proportion even—of the narrative may

be occupied directly with the affairs of other nations, while indirectly the whole bears upon its own. And what is true of an historical narrative, is true also of a prophetic description; and the fact that predictions, relating to Babylon and other nations, are introduced in the book of Isaiah, no more detracts from the truth of the opening assertion, that the vision is concerning Judah and Jerusalem, than allusions to the collateral histories of France or the United States, in a professed history of England, is inconsistent with that title. Babylon, and the other kingdoms referred to in the following chapters, have been the whip with which God hath scourged Judah, the rod with which he hath broken her, and thus her past history has been mingled up with theirs; and we learn also, that she will yet be made the instrument of humbling them—"thou shalt spoil those that spoiled them;" and thus their future histories also are linked together. Hence, too, one prominent subject of their praise and thanksgiving is said to be the overthrow of their enemies. This may be said to be pointed to as a reason for describing, in a prophetic history of Israel, the judgments of their oppressors; for the overthrow of one of them—of Babylon—is scarcely predicted, when it is said to be the subject of future praise. "In the day that the Lord shall give thee rest from thy sorrow, and from thy fear, and from the hard bondage wherein thou wast made to serve, thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, How has the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased!" xiv. 3, 4.



## CHAPTER XIII.

BABYLON, the most powerful and oppressive of Israel's foes, forms the subject of this chapter. A difficulty already adverted to presents itself in the explanation of these predictions, viz., in drawing the line, in certain instances, between what has been fulfilled already, and what is to receive a future, or it may be a fuller, accomplishment. For example, in the case of Babylon, the predictions respecting it, with which this chapter closes, have already received the fullest accomplishment of which they seem capable. And yet the previous part of the chapter harmonizes so closely with other predictions yet future, that it seems to refer to what is yet unfulfilled. It appears too high coloured an introduction to the past destruction of Babylon, and to answer to the description with which the downfall of the enemies of God, when the kingdom of righteousness is set up, is in other places prefaced, Joel ii. 3. The safe way of understanding prophecy in such cases, is to apply it, where this is pointed out, to a past fulfilment; while, at the same time, where there is a coincidence with other unfulfilled Scripture, it is not to be limited to this, but the door is to be left open for a more full accomplishment. It is no objection to such a view, that it presents a disregard to the order of time, and requires the mixing up of events not synchronous, any more than it would be to the description of a landscape, that objects the nearest and the most remote to the narrator, are promiscuously represented. The whole field of prophetic vision, close or remote, was alike in view of the prophet.

1. *The burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see.*

The vision is introduced by a general announcement of the subject of it, viz., Babylon,<sup>1</sup> but without making any limitation as to the time when the predictions unfolded would be finally executed. The celebrity of this ancient city is familiar to every reader of history. Intersected by the Euphrates, planted in the midst of a plain of vast extent and inexhaustible fertility, favourably situated for receiving the traffic of Eastern and Western Asia, it became one of the most extensive and flourishing cities of the world. To its commercial advantages were added the defences of its celebrated walls and gates, and the ornaments of its palaces and gardens. What prediction ever looked more improbable than that a city with such elements of prosperity, of security, and of beauty, should disappear—that this golden city should cease!

2-5. *Lift ye up a banner upon the high mountain, exalt the voice unto them, shake the hand, that they may go into the gates of the nobles. I have commanded my sanctified ones, I have also called my mighty ones for mine anger, even them that rejoice in my highness. The noise of a multitude in the mountains, like as (or, the likeness) of a great people; a tumultuous noise of the kingdoms of nations gathered together: the Lord of hosts mustereth the host of the battle. They come from a far country, from the end of heaven, even the Lord, and the weapons of his indignation, to destroy the whole land.*

The first thing which the prophet hears, is the solemn command of God, addressed to the nations as subject to him, to rear the standard of war (*Barnes*). Lifting up a banner, shouting, shaking, or beckoning with the hand, are the common ways of calling or summoning. The armies which were thus to be assembled against Babylon, viz., the Medes and Persians, and others, by whom, nearly

<sup>1</sup> Burden—אשׁוּר from נָשָׂא, to lift; a bearing, burden, proverb, saying.—*Ges.* The expression is applied to those prophecies which denounce judgments. They may be so called, either because their effect upon the mind of the prophet who received or announced them would be oppressive or burdensome, or rather because they would prove so to the city or nation against which they were announced, as in 2 Kings ix. 25.

two centuries subsequently, Babylon was first overthrown, are then represented (3) as being charged by God with their commission, as his instruments, appointed to serve his ends. The expression "sanctified," is here employed in the very frequent scriptural sense of "set apart for a sacred use." It is peculiarly applicable to Cyrus, the chief instrument of humbling Babylon, who is often alluded to as being the minister of the Lord's judgments: "Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden to subdue nations before him." The expression, "them that rejoice in my highness," is, literally, "the exulters of my pride," that is, according to the well-known Hebrew idiom, "my proud exulters," in allusion, Henderson supposes, to the native insolence of the Persians, and their fancied superiority over other men. No sooner is the command given than it is obeyed, and the noise of the assembled armies is described (4) as reaching the ears of the prophet. The tumult is not that of a feeble band, but of a great people—not that of one national enemy, but of many, of kingdoms of nations—not that of neighbouring kingdoms, but of those from a far country (5). The judgments predicted in the chapter are not directed only against Babylon the capital, but refer to the whole country of Babylonia or Chaldea, "they come to destroy the whole land." And how have these particulars been verified by the successive invasions of the land of Babylon by Persians, Macedonians, and Parthians, Romans, Saracens, and Turks?

6-9. *Howl ye; for the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. Therefore shall all hands be faint (or, fall down), and every man's heart shall melt: and they shall be afraid: pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth: they shall be amazed (or, wonder) one at another (or, every man at his neighbour); their faces shall be as flames (or, faces of the flames). Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it.*

The consternation and timidity of the inhabitants, the desolation of the country, and the destruction of its population, are here depicted. So it is written to the same effect, "the land shall tremble and sorrow: for every purpose of the Lord shall be performed against Babylon, to make the land of Babylon a desolation without an inhabitant," Jer. li. 29. "The king of Babylon had heard the report of them, and his hands waxed feeble: anguish took hold of him, and pangs as of a woman in travail," Jer. l. 43. The account given, both in sacred and profane history, of the first capture of the capital, by stratagem and by night, answers closely to these predictions: On that night "the king's (Belshazzar's) countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another," Dan. v. 6. The trembling of the monarch then, is but a specimen of what the nation has endured. The land has been the scene of conflagrations and of massacres without number. On one occasion, we read of 3000 Babylonians being impaled together; and on another, of 300,000 being massacred. It is related that Darius sent 50,000 women from different parts of his empire to supply the loss that had occurred during his siege of the city. As to the desolation of the land, travellers describing its various districts say of one, that it is an "untrodden desert;" of another, that it is a "barren waste;" and so of it all: and as to the destruction of its own population, the account is, "that at present the only inhabitants are the Sobeide Arabs." But while these verses receive a literal fulfilment in what has already befallen Babylon, from their connexion with what follows, some of which cannot be applied literally to the past, it appears better to understand the whole as having a reference to a period still future—the prophet passing from the immediate subject before him, of Babylon's judgments, to those of the nations of the earth at large, in which that land will share, and by



which her own will be consummated. Without regarding the prediction as having a yet prospective aspect, much of it—the stars not giving their light, the shaking the heavens, and the removing the earth out of its place—is deprived of its full and natural significancy.

10-13. *For the stars of heaven, and the constellations thereof, shall not give their light : the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity ; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. I will make a man more precious than fine gold ; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir. Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger.*

If the language of the 10th verse is to be regarded as already fulfilled, it must be understood figuratively ; and, indeed, the desolation of the country is such as if the light and heat of the heavenly bodies had been withdrawn from it. But it is not necessary to suppose that Chaldea is reduced even yet to the predicted degree of desolation ; it may be still progressing. While the desolation continues, the judgment is going on ; every day that it lasts, or that it is added to, makes the punishment the greater. Waste as it is as a whole, there are districts comparatively unscathed on which judgment may have yet to fall ; and, in the language of these verses, there may be allusion to that coming day of wrath which is to precede the reign of Christ on earth, when it seems foretold, that literally “the sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining,” Joel iii. 15. And so, while the punishing of the wicked, and the humbling of the proud (11), has been already accomplished in Babylon, it will be continued until, and completed when, “the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth,” xxiv. 22. So also, although the prediction regarding the vast destruction of men has

been verified in Chaldea, it may be so still more even in that land, in the day when, in conformity with the language of the 12th verse, "the slain of the Lord shall be many," and "seven women shall take hold of one man." Still more does a future day seem pointed to in the 13th verse: "That day," as it is described by Haggai, "when the Lord shall shake the heavens and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; when he shall shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come," ii. 6, 7; Joel iii. 16.

14-18. *And it shall be as the chased roe, and as a sheep that no man taketh up: then shall every man turn to his own people, and flee every one into his own land. Every one that is found shall be thrust through; and every one that is joined unto them shall fall by the sword. Their children also shall be dashed to pieces before their eyes; their houses shall be spoiled, and their wives ravished. Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, which shall not regard silver; and as for gold, they shall not delight in it. Their bows also shall dash the young men to pieces; and they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb; their eye shall not spare children.*

These, unlike some previous verses, predict nothing which may not be considered as already fulfilled; and perhaps the prophet may be regarded as withdrawing his contemplation from the last act in the drama of the world, and directing it more particularly to the fate of Babylon. The consternation of the city, or of the inhabitants of Chaldea generally, is likened to that of the hunted deer (14), or of a sheep which has wandered from the flock—the most timid and helpless of all creatures. As these hurry from the scene of alarm, so would every one from Babylon—for the fame and commercial enterprise of that city would make it the resort of many strangers—to their own land, from a country abandoned to the most terrible horrors of war, as practised by barbarous nations (15, 16). The bygone history of the land records that these various predictions have become facts; the tragedy here depicted has been enacted over and over again. The first siege of Babylon, here particularly foretold, was by the Medes and

Persians united for the first time under Cyrus, by whom, however, instead of being reduced to ruin, the splendour of the city was carefully preserved (17). The unusual trait of character here noticed, is recorded by Xenophon to have distinguished Cyrus, whose indifference to wealth extended to his army. The use of bows, and the destruction of children, usages almost unknown in modern warfare, prevailed then.

19-22. *And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew (or, as the overthrowing) Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation; neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there, neither shall the shepherds make their fold there: but wild beasts (or, Ziim) of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures (or, Ochim); and owls (or, ostriches, or, daughters of the owl) shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts (or, Iim) of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses (or, palaces), and dragons in their pleasant palaces: and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged.*

The remaining predictions are limited to Babylon, the capital of Chaldea. Its ancient magnificence is significantly expressed by the titles, "the glory of kingdoms," "the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency;" or literally, "the ornament of the pride of the Chaldees"—the nation, whatever the origin of the name which is uncertain, of which Babylon was the capital. It is also called in Scripture, "the golden city," "the lady of kingdoms," "the praise of the whole earth." This description of it is fully corroborated by Herodotus, Strabo, Pliny, and others, whose account of its splendour is such as almost to exceed belief. The first states its walls to have been 60 miles in extent, 300 feet in height, and 75 in breadth; while its streets and its gates of brass were of corresponding number and magnitude. If the first part of Isaiah's succinct description narrates what it was, the remainder represents as truthfully what it is, and what it shall continue. We have but to change the future tense of pro-

phecy into the past and present of history, and we have the condition of Babylon before the eye. No inhabitant, not even the Arab or the shepherd, dwells among the ruins (20). The only tenants are the wild beasts, whose home is the desert, and the doleful creatures, whose haunts are ruins. Jerome relates, that the walls of the city were employed in the fourth century by the Persian princes to preserve wild beasts for the purposes of the chase. There are innumerable testimonies by modern travellers also to the fulfilment of these predictions. One narrates, that it is "a tenantless and desolate metropolis;" another, that "he could not induce his Arab guides to remain towards night from the apprehension of evil spirits;" a third, that "there are many dens of wild beasts in various parts." There is difficulty in determining what animals are described in several instances. The fact, however, remains, that the ruins of the once magnificent Babylon are now occupied by wild beasts. Bats and owls, jackals, hyenas, lions, the quills of porcupines, the bones of sheep and goats, have all been found among them. The following is Lowth's translation, which has been followed by others:—

"There shall the wild beasts of the desert lodge ;  
And howling monsters shall fill their houses :  
And there shall the daughters of the ostrich dwell ;  
And there shall the satyrs hold their revels ;  
And wolves shall howl to one another in their palaces ;  
And dragons in their voluptuous pavilions."



## CHAPTER XIV.

THE description of the fate of Babylon is here interrupted by a reference to its bearing on the history of Judah and Israel—the great subject of the prophet's vision. The destruction of this mighty, but guilty, and therefore doomed, city, as one of the enemies and oppressors of God's peculiar and covenanted people, would, when Judah's judgments should be past, and her country and her privileges be restored, form the subject of her grateful praise. A prediction of Israel's recovery is, in this connexion, introduced (1-3), followed by a song of rejoicing over Babylon (4-23). The passage cannot refer, as has been supposed, to the deliverance of the Jews at the end of the seventy years' captivity. It could not then be sung (4)—“How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased!” or (11)—“Thy pomp is brought down to the grave.... the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee.” In fact, the base and theme of the song is the utter humiliation of Babylon. But such language would have been inapplicable at the period of the Jewish return from the captivity, or on any occasion of deliverance from Babylon in time past. On their return to Jerusalem after the Babylonish captivity, that capital was in the very zenith of its glory, Cyrus upholding it in the magnificence in which he found it, and transmitting it unimpaired to his successor. Even long afterwards, Alexander had thoughts of making it the capital of his empire, and although it gradually waned as its rival Seleucia rose to greatness, yet, so late as the beginning of the Christian era, it is

said to have been partly inhabited. Before, therefore, it could be said of Babylon that "the golden city ceased," Jerusalem had fallen. The Jews had no opportunity of taking up the proverb then. Instead of triumphing over the downfall of an enemy, they had to mourn over their own. But "the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land;" and "in that day they shall take up this proverb against the king of Babylon—How hath the oppressor ceased!" The time referred to, then, of the singing this song of triumph, is the same as that pointed out in chapter xii. 1—the time of Judah's and Israel's final establishment in their own land, and their adoption of the Christian's faith; and the desolation painted so graphically in the song is all that Babylon and its land were to experience, whether now past, or passing, or yet to come.

*1-3. For the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land; and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob. And the people shall take them, and bring them to their place; and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the Lord for servants and handmaids: and they shall take them captives, whose captives they were (or, that had taken them captives); and they shall rule over their oppressors. And it shall come to pass in the day that the Lord shall give thee rest from thy sorrow, and from thy fear, and from the hard bondage wherein thou wast made to serve,*

One new incident in this prediction of the return of Judah and Israel is the attachment which shall be cherished toward them by other nations. "The strangers—Gentiles—shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob." Then, as the same thing is more fully described by Zechariah—"Ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you," viii. 23. "Nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee," Isa. lv. 5. A second incident introduced, is the

assistance which they will receive from the nations among whom they have been scattered. The people, that is, the strangers, shall take them, that is, Judah and Israel, and bring them to their place, Jerusalem. Other passages predict the same extraordinary circumstance more fully and distinctly. "They shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried on their shoulders," xlix. 22. "Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far . . . and the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee," lx. 9, 10. Another peculiarity in the future history of Israel is, that from these strangers, after their return, they shall exact, or at least receive, service—"the house of Israel shall possess them for servants and handmaids." This also is in harmony with other Scriptures—"Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers; they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet," xlix. 23; "Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your ploughmen and your vine-dressers," lxi. 5; "The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish," lx. 12. How great a contrast in each of these particulars between what Israel has been, and what she yet shall be.

The poetic beauty and sublimity of the song which follows have been universally admitted and admired. Its superiority over all the other poetical portions of Scripture, in which is displayed so great a profusion of the choicest poetry, has been maintained; and even with the disadvantage of a translation, its excellence is striking. Its personifications, particularly, are remarkable; and although so bold as almost to exhaust the license of poetry, they are as felicitous as they are bold. The song considered before, chapter xii., is one of thanksgiving; this is one of triumph.

4-6. *That thou shalt take up this proverb (or, taunting speech) against*

*the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city (or, the exactress of gold) ceased! The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked, and the sceptre of the rulers. He who smote the people in wrath with a continual stroke (or, a stroke without removing), he that ruled the nations in anger, is persecuted, and none hindereth.*

The song proclaims the annihilation of the city, and the circumstances which aggravated its fall.<sup>1</sup> It was the fall of a tyrannical city; of a wealthy—a golden city. Its fall involved all classes, even the rulers (5), whose were the rod and sceptre. It was the fall of a mighty power—it had ruled the nations (6); and of a cruel power—it had smitten the people in wrath; it was the fall of a power unlamented, to avert which no power had interfered, which none had sought to hinder.

*7-9. The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet: they break forth into singing. Yea, the fir-trees rejoice at thee, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying, Since thou art laid down, no feller is come up against us. Hell (or, the grave) from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones (or, leaders, or, great goats) of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations.*

In a succession of bold apostrophes, the things on the earth, and even those under the earth, animate and inanimate, are described as participating in the universal rejoicing. The whole earth is now at rest (7) after the extirpation of the power that troubled it. Lebanon has peace (8); it is now safe. The grave,<sup>2</sup> eager to possess a victim so worthy of it, advances to meet it (9); the dead are on the outlook; even the kings, represented as retaining in the state of the dead the distinction which they held on earth, leave their thrones to welcome such a guest.

*10-15. All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become*

<sup>1</sup> מִשְׁלַּל, a comparison, a proverb, a song, particularly a satiric song. Hab. ii. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Hell here, as in many other places, is שְׁאֵל, answering to the Greek ᾗδης, the region or state of the dead.



*weak as we? art thou become like unto us? Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee. How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer (or, O Day-star), son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God (or, El); I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.*

These rise up and meet the fallen Babylon, not with sympathy, but with taunts, adding to her misery (10). Art thou, the proud one, fallen? Is the mighty one become weak as we? So it is written, "How is Babylon become a desolation among the nations!... Every one that goeth by Babylon shall be astonished," Jer. l. 23, 13. She who was all magnificence and pleasure has had worms for her couch and covering (11). However extreme such a comparison may appear, it is as appropriate as it is extreme. Like the body in the grave, which is the prey of worms, and whose remains are ashes, Babylon too has found a grave; it has been entombed in its own ruins, and all that remains of it is its dust. The magnitude and completeness of Babylon's fall are further suggested by the comparisons of the morning-star<sup>1</sup> falling from heaven (12), and of a tree cut down to the ground. And as the higher the tree, the more terrible its fall; as the loftier the pinnacle, the more utter its destruction; so, in proportion to the pride of Babylon would be her catastrophe. In her arrogance she had exalted herself above God (13, 14), and her downfall would be proportionally great (15). She had exalted herself to heaven, and, like Capernaum, she would be thrust down to hell, that is, to the grave. Her descent would be from the throne to the dust: "Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon," xlvii. 1.—What

<sup>1</sup> לִלְכָּד, the morning-star. In the Vulgate, Lucifer.

the allusion is in the clause, "I will sit also on the mount," is disputed. Some consider the reference to be to the mountains in or around Jerusalem; others to the heathen idea of there being somewhere in the distant north a very high mountain inhabited by the gods, and where they assembled. The pride of Babylon is often remarked in the predictions concerning her: "According as she hath done, do unto her, for she hath been proud against the Lord. Behold, I am against thee, O thou most proud," Jer. l. 29, 31. "Thou saidst, I shall be a lady for ever. Thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and there is none beside me," xlvii. 7, 10. But as her pride has been, so has been its humiliation. She has passed from one extreme to the other; from being one of the greatest cities on which the sun ever shone, to a mass of unsightly ruins.

16-23. *They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; that made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners (or, did not let his prisoners loose homewards)? All the kings of the nations, even all of them, lie in glory, every one in his own house: but thou art cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch, and as the raiment of those that are slain, thrust through with a sword, that go down to the stones of the pit; as a carcase trodden under feet. Thou shalt not be joined with them in burial, because thou hast destroyed thy land, and slain thy people: the seed of evil-doers shall never be renowned. Prepare slaughter for his children for the iniquity of their fathers; that they do not rise, nor possess the land, nor fill the face of the world with cities. For I will rise up against them, saith the Lord of hosts, and cut off from Babylon the name, and remnant, and son, and nephew, saith the Lord. I will also make it a possession for the bittern, and pools of water; and I will sweep it with the besom of destruction, saith the Lord of hosts.*

The change to be experienced by her is described further as being so great that it would be with difficulty, and only by close inspection, that she would be recognised (16), so stricken and reduced would she become. This has been literally the case; so much so, that until a recent period the site of the city was supposed to be unknown. Doubt,

amazement, reproach, are expressed in the exclamation, "Is this the man that made the earth to tremble?" Babylon was once the mistress of most of the known world, and an oppressive sceptre it was she swayed. The seventy years' captivity of Israel was a specimen of the severity of her rule, and illustrates the prediction that she did not open the house of her prisoners (17). Another feature of her ignominy would be the destruction of the tombs of her kings. Among other nations these are sacredly preserved (18); the tomb of Cyrus, the first conqueror of Babylon, still exists. But those of her kings have perished in the universal wreck, and their bodies, mingled with the common dust, have been cast out (19) as worthless branches; or as the pierced and gory garments of the slain are thrown away; or as the carcase which is trampled under foot in battle. The incidents of this passage have been supposed to meet particularly in Belshazzar, the last of the kings, who perished when the city was sacked by Cyrus. Amid the darkness and confusion of that awful night, it is probable that his body would be left among the heaps of slain, without recognition, and without a tomb. But there is no necessity for so limiting the prophecy; for in the retrospective view taken by the Jewish nation when they shall sing this song, the ignominy will hang over all the kings of Babylon alike. But the curse which would light upon the inhabitants of Babylon for their sin, would smite also their children (20-22), and literally, it may be said that the name and remnant have been cut off from Babylon. As a kingdom, it has long been blotted from the catalogue of nations. Nay, the curse has extended farther than this, even to the city and land (23).—It is doubtful what creature is intended by the bittern. Bochart considered it to be the porcupine, whose quills have been found among the ruins of Babylon. The prediction that it should be pools of water—the last thing to be expected where had been foretold a wilder-

ness, a dry land, and a desert—has also been literally fulfilled. The ruins are exposed to the inundations of the Euphrates, so that, in the words of a traveller, “morasses and ponds track the ground in various parts.” Even now, although there be vestiges of prosperity in different spots of the land over which the besom of destruction has yet to pass, yet of ancient Babylon itself it has spared nothing—all is clean swept.

24-27. *The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand; that I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountains tread him under foot: then shall his yoke depart from off them, and his burden depart from off their shoulders. This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth; and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?*

The subject of prediction is now changed from the destruction of one of Judah's oppressors to that of another of them, namely, the Assyrian. There is something of the same difficulty in the application of this passage as was mentioned in the case of the tenth chapter, namely, in determining how far it ought to be understood of the deliverance of the Jews from the army of Shalmaneser, and how far its fulfilment is still to come. Its position in the chapter, being in the heart of prophetic events, which, although fulfilled in part, are looked at from the point of Israel's conversion; and particular expressions, as, “This is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations,”—one which cannot be applied to events at the period of Judah's deliverance from Sennacherib, but which evidently points to the time when the Lord shall plead with all nations for his people and his heritage, Israel,—require that the prophecy be regarded as still prospective. Assyria, that is, the nation which may then possess that land, is yet to be the instrument of oppression to the



people of God. Among those of them who shall at last return to their own land, are numbered such as "are ready to perish in the land of Assyria," xxvii. 13. "They shall yet tremble as a dove out of the land of Assyria," Hos. xi. 11. His yoke shall yet be upon them, and his burden upon their shoulders, but it shall not remain: "He shall deliver us from the Assyrian when he cometh into our land, and when he treadeth within our borders; and the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord," Micah v. 6, 7. As if to meet the hesitation of men in admitting what is revealed of the future deliverance of his peculiar people, and the overthrow of their enemies, it is added, "The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass."

The time of the accomplishment of the following prediction appears unquestionably future. Attempts have been made to discover its fulfilment in the circumstances occurring about the period of Ahaz's death, but with what success may be judged from the differences of opinion among commentators in their exposition, and from the system of one being very often attacked and subverted by the next. The application of the passage seems to be determined by its conclusion—"What shall one *then* answer the messengers of the nation? That the Lord hath founded Zion." Surely the founding of Zion here is the same as what is described when it is said that "the Lord shall build up Zion," Ps. cii. 16—a work yet to be done, for it is then, according to the context, that he "shall appear in his glory, that his name will be declared in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem, when the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the Lord." And again, it is said, "When the Lord doth build up Jerusalem, he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel," Ps. cxlvii. 2. The founding Zion is thus connected with events still to come. The fulfilment of the passage is therefore

future ; and its singularity, its standing so much by itself, invest it with peculiar obscurity.

28-30. *In the year that king Ahaz died was this burden. Rejoice not thou, whole Palestina, because the rod of him that smote thee is broken : for out of the serpent's root shall come forth a cockatrice (or, adder), and his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent. And the first-born of the poor shall feed, and the needy shall lie down in safety ; and I will kill thy root with famine, and he shall slay thy remnant.*

These verses state the time when the prophecy was communicated to Isaiah. For the import of the word burden, see chapter xiii. 1. The subject of the prediction is Palestine<sup>1</sup> or Philistia (29), a division of Canaan long possessed by the Philistines, here denoting apparently the whole land. It, or the particular division of it, is warned against indulging in ill-timed joy, for though one oppressor was removed, there would succeed one also cruel—a cockatrice ; and he again would be followed by a third—his fruit would be a fiery flying serpent. A season of oppression to extend throughout three generations of rulers, appears to be indicated. But the trouble of Palestina would not be uninterrupted (30). The rod of the first oppressor is broken, and there is a lull in the infliction of judgment, so that the first-born or chief of the poor may feed. But the gleam is transient ; under the succeeding tyrants, the root, the remnant, are slain.

31, 32. *Howl, O gate ; cry, O city ; thou, whole Palestina, art dissolved : for there shall come from the north a smoke, and none shall be (or, he shall not be) alone in his appointed times (or, assemblies). What shall one then answer the messengers of the nation ? That the Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of his people shall trust in (or, betake themselves unto) it.*

The first of these verses points to a time of general consternation and suffering following the events foretold in the preceding. It appears to refer to the oft-predicted

<sup>1</sup> In the Hebrew, פלשתי.

season of trouble which is yet to befall Judah in their own land, when the Lord shall purge Jerusalem from the blood thereof by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning; when two parts thereof shall be cut off and die. The quarter from which her danger comes—from the north—is the same here as is represented of that which yet awaits her, as when it is said, “Set up the standard towards Zion, for I will bring evil from the north, and a great destruction; for this gird you with sackcloth, lament and howl, for the fierce anger of the Lord is not turned back from us,” Jer. iv. 6, 8. And in Joel ii. 20, where the last enemies of Judah are described at length, in reference to their dispersion it is said, “I will remove far off from you the northern army.” Though forming one host, it shall be made up of many nations—“he shall not be alone (margin) in his appointed times.” There is much diversity of opinion in regard to the correct translation here. The rendering of Lowth is—“there shall not be a straggler among his armies.” This quite agrees with the description given of the host in Joel—“They shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks: neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path.”—The concluding verse points to the ultimate peace of Jerusalem. Of the same period it is written, “The Lord hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the King of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not; and to Zion, Let not thy hands be slack,” Zeph. iii. 15, 16. “I shall also leave in thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord,” Zeph. iii. 12.

## CHAPTER XV.

THE predicted judgments of Moab form the subject of this and the following chapter. That country bordered Judea on the east and south-east. Like the whole region around, it must have been singularly fertile and populous, from the vast numbers of cities in ruins which are now to be met with. The description of its desolation is a general one, and has to be understood as embracing all its judgments, past or to come, up to the moment of the removal of the curse from the land. How far some of these predictions may receive a further accomplishment, it is impossible to determine; but that the judgments of Moab have not yet been all poured out, appears from such passages as the following:—In the day when Israel shall sing, “Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, we will rejoice and be glad in his salvation,” it is added, “for in this mountain (Zion) shall the hand of the Lord rest, and Moab shall be trodden down under him, even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill,” xxv. 9, 10.

1. *The burden of Moab. Because in the night Ar of Moab is laid waste, and brought to silence; because in the night Kir of Moab is laid waste, and brought to silence (or, cut off).*

The prophecy opens with predicting the utter destruction by night of Ar, the capital of Moab, and of Kir, another of the principal cities, which some have supposed to have stood on the site of the modern Karak, which is a collection of hamlets rather than a town, but the only one now existing east of the Jordan, with the exception of Assalt,



a mere village, the whole plains of Moab being covered with ruins. The sites of these and the other cities occurring throughout the prophecy are ascertained, except in a few cases, which are doubtful.

2, 3. *He is gone up to Bajith, and to Dibon, the high places, to weep : Moab shall howl over Nebo, and over Medeba : on all their heads shall be baldness, and every beard cut off. In their streets they shall gird themselves with sackcloth : on the tops of their houses, and in their streets, every one shall howl, weeping abundantly (or, descending into weeping, or, coming down with weeping).*

The danger is here described as extending over the whole land. The Moabites are represented as fleeing to the high places, where their temples stood, to seek refuge and to weep, and as assuming all the outward symbols of eastern grief, howling, cutting off the hair, clothing themselves in sackcloth. The language of the whole prophecy is abrupt. In this it resembles many other passages in Isaiah, in which abruptness is evidently studied, as, for example, that contained in chapter x. 28-32, in which the hasty progress of the Assyrian foe, from town to town, is vividly pictured to the eye. The style was doubtless selected as the best suited to the scene described, and the consternation which would prevail.

4, 5. *And Heshbon shall cry, and Elealeh ; their voice shall be heard even unto Jahaz : therefore the armed soldiers of Moab shall cry out ; his life shall be grievous unto him. My heart shall cry out for Moab ; his fugitives shall flee unto Zoar (or, to the borders thereof, even as), an heifer of three years old : for by the mounting up of Luhith with weeping shall they go it up ; for in the way of Horonaim they shall raise up a cry of destruction (or, breaking).*

The panic is represented as universal ; it extends from one city to another ; it seizes the very armed warriors of Moab. Even the heart of the prophet, though it was the distress of sinful men which he saw in vision, bleeds at the spectacle : in every direction are they seen to flee ; from all quarters are they heard to mourn.—The second

clause of the 5th verse, "his fugitives shall flee unto Zoar," is much simplified by Lowth's translation :—

"To Zoar (she crieth out) like the lowing of a young heifer :

Yea, the ascent of Luhith with weeping shall they ascend."

That such is the meaning of the former of these clauses appears more likely from a prophecy in Jeremiah, which is almost the parallel of this in Isaiah, where the corresponding clause is, "they have uttered their voice from Zoar even unto Horonaim, as an heifer three years old," xlviii. 34. The allusion is supposed by Gesenius to be to the circumstance that at this age the heifer was first employed in purposes of agriculture. So Moab would be made subject.

6-9. *For the waters of Nimrim shall be desolate (or, desolations) : for the hay is withered away, the grass faileth, there is no green thing. Therefore the abundance they have gotten, and that which they have laid up, shall they carry away to the brook of the willows (or, valley of the Arabians). For the cry is gone round about the borders of Moab ; the howling thereof unto Eglaim, and the howling thereof unto Beer-elim. For the waters of Dimon shall be full of blood : for I will bring more (or, additions) upon Dimon, lions upon him that escapeth of Moab, and upon the remnant of the land.*

The very land itself is said next to participate in the common destruction ; its waters are dried up ; its vegetation is withered. The whole plains of Moab are in the hands of the Bedouin Arabs. Buckhardt relates of them, that they do not cut the grass for hay, but suffer it to wither and be lost. They are a people of no understanding. So blighted is it foretold that the land should become, that even the enemy by whom it is invaded cannot retain possession (7), but are forced to withdraw, with their plunder, to a watered region. From every spot of the desolate scene arises the cry of wailing (8) ; and well it might be so, for such is the carnage, that the river

flows red with blood (9) ; and such the desolation, that where crowded cities had stood, and the richest vegetation had flourished, wild beasts, it is predicted, would have their haunts.

The incidents attending the first destruction of Moab, as here foretold, cannot be attested by history, because no record of its downfall exists ; but in so far as this prophecy predicts the condition to which Moab should be reduced, it is verified by its past and present state. All that is here declared regarding it has now become matter of fact. Its emptiness of inhabitants, its barrenness, and all the other features of the picture drawn by the prophet, may be seen realized in the present condition of Moab ; and all that travellers narrate of it is the unmitigated desolation of what was once one of the most fertile of kingdoms, and the occurrence, as they traverse the land, of city after city buried in their ruins, in what was once one of the most populous of countries.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

AT this point there is a change in the subject of the prophecy respecting Moab, which does not resume its former strain until the 6th verse. In the 5th verse there is a clear reference to the reign of Christ in righteousness ; and this division of the prophecy, and, through it, the whole prophecy, thus becomes connected with that event.

1. *Send ye the lamb to the ruler of the land from Sela (or, Petra, or, a rock) to the wilderness, unto the mount of the daughter of Zion.*

In this verse an injunction is addressed to Moab to send the lamb to the ruler of the land to mount Zion, from Sela or Petra, the capital of Edom. This is gene-

rally explained of a continuation of the tribute paid by Moab to the king of Israel, it being taken for granted that Edom was tributary to that nation, 2 Kings iii. 4. But that tribute was paid nearly 200 years before, and there is no evidence that Edom was tributary to Moab. And as the connexion of the passage with the 6th verse renders a future explanation preferable, it is more consistent to understand it of tribute paid to Christ as king of righteousness, and to refer it to the time when "they that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him, when the kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents, and the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts." Or, more generally, for the name of Christ is not introduced, it may be understood of tribute paid to the saviours or deliverers, whoever they be, who shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau, when the kingdom shall be the Lord's, Obad. 21.

2. *For it shall be, that as a wandering bird cast out of the nest (or, a nest forsaken), so the daughters of Moab shall be at the fords of Arnon.*

The description of Moab's desolation, which is resumed here, is applicable in the present condition, but will no doubt be equally or more so at a future day. Even at the fords of Arnon, the chief river of Moab, and therefore the last spot where misery might be expected, are the daughters of Moab, at present the Arabs, the only inhabitants, compared to a bird cast out of the nest. Of a tribe of them found located in the immediate vicinity of the river, one traveller remarks, that "they wander about in misery, and are not able to feed any flocks of sheep or goats: their tents are very miserable."

3-5. *Take (or, bring) counsel, execute judgment; make thy shadow as the night in the midst of the noon-day; hide the outcasts; bewray not him that wandereth. Let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab: be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler; for the extortioner (or, wringer) is at an end, the spoiler ceaseth, the oppressors (or, the*



*treaders down) are consumed out of the land. And in mercy shall the throne be established (or, prepared); and he shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging, and seeking judgment, and hastening righteousness.*

The natural view to take of these verses is certainly to consider them as addressed to Moab in behalf of Judah, not to Judah in behalf of Moab. This appears from the 4th verse. According to this view, God exhorts Moab to act wisely, by extending shelter and protection to the outcasts of Judah. This they have often needed in past ages, but have never yet received at the hands of Moab; but they will need it yet again, when Jerusalem, for the last time, shall "drink at the hand of the Lord the cup of his fury," li. 17; when "half the city shall go forth into captivity, and they shall flee as they fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah," Zech. xiv. 2-5. The period referred to, when Judah will need a refuge in Edom, appears to be the same as is intended when it is said that, for the elects' sake, the days of great tribulation shall be shortened, else no flesh should be saved; or when the nation is commanded to enter her chambers, and hide for a little moment, until the indignation should be overpast.<sup>1</sup>—The inducement held out to Moab to welcome the outcasts of Judah is twofold; first, that the reign of their oppressors would be shortlived; it is represented as already over (4), "the extortioner is at an end," a prediction not yet realized, for the oppressions of Israel have not yet ceased; and next, it would be succeeded by the kingdom of the Messiah (5), the seat of which would be the tabernacle of David, (Jerusalem, or rather the temple there), and the character of which would be mercy, truth, justice, and righteousness. This is the order and character of the establishment of Christ's reign on earth,

<sup>1</sup> "Make thy shadow as the night." A shadow is a well-known Scripture emblem of shelter; a shadow as the night, is one complete as night. The value of such a shadow at noon-day, under an eastern sun, must be experienced to be fully prized.

as often set forth. Thus, in Isaiah ix. 5-7, there is described, first, the great day of tribulation, "this battle shall be with burning and fuel of fire;" next, the reign of Christ in the tabernacle of David, "his government upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom;" and next, the character of his government, "with judgment and with justice from henceforth and for ever."

6. *We have heard of the pride of Moab (he is very proud), even of his haughtiness, and his pride, and his wrath: but his lies shall not be so.*

After this glance at the Messiah's reign, and its bearing upon Moab, the prophet resumes the subject of the general desolation of the kingdom. The cause of it is first noted, viz., the pride of the nation, which is described as excessive and notorious. Their overthrow is frequently ascribed to the same cause. Almost the same description of her pride occurs in Jer. xlviii. 29, 30; and it is added, verse 42, "Moab shall be destroyed from being a people, because he hath magnified himself against the Lord." So in Zeph. ii. 9, 10, "Surely Moab shall be as Sodom; this shall they have for their pride." The expression, "his lies (literally, boastings) shall not be so," seems to mean, they shall not prove well founded; they shall be vain.

7-11. *Therefore shall Moab howl for Moab, every one shall howl: for the foundations of Kir-hareseth shall ye mourn (or, mutter); surely they are stricken. For the fields of Heshbon languish, and the vine of Sibmah: the lords of the heathen hath broken down the principal plants thereof; they are come even unto Jazer, they wandered through the wilderness: her branches are stretched out (or, plucked up), they are gone over the sea. Therefore I will bewail with the weeping of Jazer the vine of Sibmah: I will water thee with my tears, O Heshbon, and Elealeh; for the shouting for (or, the alarm is fallen upon) thy summer fruits, and for thy harvest, is fallen. And gladness is taken away, and joy out of the plentiful field; and in the vineyards there shall be no singing, neither shall there be shouting: the treaders shall tread out no wine in their presses; I have made their vintage-shouting to cease. Wherefore my bowels shall sound like an harp for Moab, and mine inward parts for Kir-harsh.*

On account of their pride, destruction, it is foretold, would overtake their country, and they would howl for the ruin of its cities. The land itself also would be involved in the general desolation (8); the fields, even those of Heshbon, the richest of them, and the vines, would languish: not only would the fruits be blighted, but the plants, the vines themselves, the great produce and support of the country, would be cut down: those of Sibmah even, the best of all, whose luxuriance carried their fame far and wide, would be destroyed. The loss of these, the source of their wealth and subsistence, is represented as exciting peculiar grief (9). It moves the prophet to tears, bitter as those with which the inhabitants of Jazer bewailed the loss of their vines, for the joyful shouting of the vintage and the harvest is brought to an end. The prophetic description is a faithful picture of the condition to which the land has been reduced. The vineyards, and along with them, the shouting for the summer fruits, have utterly vanished (10). So much is the prophet affected by the misery of the scene which he beholds in vision and depicts, that his feelings are ever interfering with his narrative. He again describes himself as moved and pained in the highest degree (11), so that his emotions seek vent in moanings resembling the doleful strains of the harp—a striking testimony to the extremity of the desolation which he is called upon to witness and pourtray.—“My bowels shall sound.” “In classic writers, the word ‘bowels’ denotes the *upper* viscera of victims; the heart, the lungs, &c. In the Scriptures it denotes the *inward parts*, evidently also the upper viscera, regarded as the seat of the emotions and passions. The word, as we use it, denoting the lower viscera, by no means expresses the sense of the word in the Scriptures. We express the idea by the use of the word *heart*, the seat of the affections.”—*Barnes*.

12. *And it shall come to pass, when it is seen that Moab is weary on*

*the high place, that he shall come to his sanctuary to pray ; but he shall not prevail.*

The unhappy nation, exhausted with fruitless appeals to their gods on the high places where their temples were erected, abandoning these, is here represented as flocking, as a last but vain resource, to the temple of some noted deity.

13, 14. *This is the word that the Lord hath spoken concerning Moab since that time. But now the Lord hath spoken, saying, Within three years, as the years of an hireling, and the glory of Moab shall be condemned, with all that great multitude ; and the remnant shall be very small and feeble (or, not many).*

The peculiar construction of these concluding verses has given rise to the supposition that they were added by the divine direction at a later period. The 13th verse applies to what precedes. The language of the last, " But now the Lord hath spoken," has been supposed to be a supplement to the prediction, announcing that its accomplishment would commence within the period of three years. It is immaterial whether or not this opinion be adopted, as it cannot be said to what hostile invasion reference is made, so scanty are the materials from which the early history of the judgments of Moab can be ascertained. There was, however, no fulfilment of these predictions within three years of the prophesying of Isaiah. The passage may refer to an event still future.—The " years of an hireling," or hired person. The allusion seems to be to the strictness with which the time of service stipulated is adhered to. It is limited, and not exceeded by a single day ; so fixed was the hour of Moab's fall.



## CHAPTER XVII.

DAMASCUS, the capital of Syria, is represented as the subject of this prediction, but, as it advances, it embraces also the whole kingdom of Syria, and Ephraim or Israel.

1-3. *The burden of Damascus. Behold, Damascus is taken away from being a city, and it shall be a ruinous heap. The cities of Aroer are forsaken; they shall be for flocks, which shall lie down, and none shall make them afraid. The fortress also shall cease from Ephraim, and the kingdom from Damascus, and the remnant of Syria: they shall be as the glory of the children of Israel, saith the Lord of hosts.*

The passage begins with predicting the reduction of Damascus to ruins. It was a very celebrated city, situated in a plain of great extent and fertility at the foot of Lebanon. Like the neighbouring region, it has often changed masters, and has suffered from the successive invasions of Assyrians, Romans, Saracens, Turks, and others, although it is at this moment the greatest city in Syria, and one of the most important cities of the East. The desertion of the cities of Aroer, except by flocks, which would maintain undisturbed possession, is then foretold (2). There is a city of this name in Moab, in the vicinity of the Arnon, surrounded with many others, all sharers of the fate of Moab,—reduced to utter desolation. These appear to be “the cities of Aroer,” those, viz., which lay in the neighbourhood of Aroer, and of which it was the chief. The prediction of judgment embraces also Ephraim (3), or the ten tribes of Israel, of which it was the most conspicuous,—its fortified cities would be destroyed. It embraces likewise the remainder of Syria,

as well as Damascus, its capital,—it would cease to be a kingdom. The fortresses of Ephraim are specified, from that country being distinguished by the number and strength of its fortified places,—such as Saphet, Paneas, Tiberias. But not one now remains. Many of them were strong fortresses in the times of the Crusades, especially Paneas and Saphet. The last of the fortresses in Ephraim, Saphet and Tiberias, were destroyed by an earthquake in 1834. Syria is further threatened with the fate of the children of Israel; and what that would be is declared in the following verses:—

4, 5. *And in that day it shall come to pass, that the glory of Jacob shall be made thin, and the fatness of his flesh shall wax lean. And it shall be as when the harvest-man gathereth the corn, and reapeth the ears with his arm; and it shall be as he that gathereth ears in the valley of Rephaim.*

The destruction of the glory or power of Israel is here represented by two expressive comparisons. The nation would be weakened and wasted like a man reduced by disease, and swept from the land as the ground is cleared by the reaper. Rephaim was a valley close by Jerusalem, which seems to have been distinguished by its fertility. This prophetic description of what Syria and the kingdom of the Israelites would become, has been in a great measure, if not fully, verified in the past history and present state of the land. From Syria, as from Israel, the kingdom has long ceased; many enemies have successively possessed and ravaged it. The following is the testimony of Volney:—"I wandered over the country; I traversed the provinces; I enumerated the kingdoms of Damascus and Idumea, of Jerusalem and Samaria (Israel). This Syria, said I to myself, now almost depopulated, then contained a hundred flourishing cities, and abounded with towns, villages, and hamlets. What are become of so many productions of the hand of man! What are become of those ages of abundance and of life!" At the

same time, it does not appear that the complete accomplishment of these judgments has yet been realized. Damascus, the capital of Syria, although often besieged and plundered, has not yet ceased to be a city. The process of desolation was lately going forward in the land. The district of Lebanon suffered severely only a few years ago from civil war; there are elements of destruction enough to be seen in its present political and social state; the embers of revolution are smouldering, not quenched; and they have but to be stirred up to make the "remnant of Syria"—what of it is yet spared—yet more empty. There is, however, a marked distinction between the judgments denounced against Babylon, Moab, and other countries, and those to be inflicted on the kingdom of Israel; and there is a similar difference in their present condition. Unmitigated desolation was to be, and has been, the portion of the former, but not of the latter. This difference is indicated in the following verse:—

6. *Yet gleaning-grapes shall be left in it, as the shaking of an olive-tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost fruitful branches thereof, saith the Lord God of Israel.*

As a few grapes or olives are left by the gatherer in the most distant branches, so gleanings would be left in the land of Israel. Similar language is employed in the 9th verse; and in a following chapter, xxiv. 13, the same figure is applied to the condition of Judah, the kingdom of the two tribes: "These shall be as the shaking of an olive-tree, and as the gleaning-grapes when the vintage is done." (See vi. 13.) This exception in favour of these countries is verified. They present what is an anomaly among judgment-stricken countries—what is unknown in some of those around them, viz., occasional features of fertility and beauty in a landscape of desolation. They have their oases in the desert—the vintage has been reaped, but there remain the gleaning-grapes. While all travellers describe these lands as presenting as a whole

the very picture of ruin and barrenness, they also speak of stumbling from time to time on districts that vie, in the luxuriance of their vegetation, and the beauty of their scenery, with the most favoured spots on earth. The mountains of Gilead, the valley of Sychar (Nablous), Hebron, Jaffa, and other regions, are represented as combining the utmost fertility with the most varied and delightful scenery—memorials of what the land has been, and emblems of what it might become.

7, 8. *At that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel. And he shall not look to the altars, the work of his hands, neither shall respect that which his fingers have made, either the groves or the images (or, sun-images).*

These verses point evidently to a period yet to come. They predict a general looking to the Lord by men ; and as a necessary consequence and accompaniment of this, a turning from the work of their own hands. The same sequence of events is traced in other passages, as in xxiv. 13, 14, when, after there shall be “in the midst of the land as the shaking of an olive-tree,” it is added, “they (the Jews) shall lift up their voice, they shall sing for the majesty of the Lord ;” teaching, as in the text, that the desolation of the land to the extent determined will be followed by the restoration of the nation to their own land.

9. *In that day shall his strong cities be as a forsaken bough, and an uppermost branch, which they left because of the children of Israel : and there shall be desolation.*

The degree of desolation which the countries referred to should reach, is still more minutely particularized here. There would be strong cities remaining—they would not all be laid in ruins or disappear, as has been the case in other lands ; but although left they would be empty, like the bough which is forsaken or deprived of its leaves and fruits—like the uppermost branch, which is most exposed and most stripped by the storm. The same truth seems



taught here, as where it is said in an early part of Isaiah, that the "cities would be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man," see vi. 11; a state of matters which, however extraordinary, is witnessed in the Hauran, east of the Jordan, where, in repeated instances, cities remain in wonderful preservation, but without inhabitant. The purpose of this arrangement of Providence is also stated. They—these cities—are left, because of the children of Israel. This is confirmed by similar passages: "The city that went out by a thousand shall leave an hundred, and that which went out by a hundred shall leave ten to the house of Israel," Amos v. 3. The circumstance that such cities remain ready for the reception of the nation, and that even in some cases, as in Jerash, where they are in ruins, the hewn stones are still fresh, almost as from the chisel, and fit for being immediately rebuilt, preserved by the excellence of the climate, shows how the way is already prepared for their repossession.

10, 11. *Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the Rock of thy strength, therefore shalt thou plant pleasant plants, and shalt set it with strange slips: in the day shalt thou make thy plant to grow, and in the morning shalt thou make thy seed to flourish; but the harvest shall be a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow (or, removed in the day of inheritance, and there shall be deadly sorrow).*

These verses describe events which are to follow the return of the Jews to Judea in their national capacity and unconverted state. They are supposed to be returned, and to engage in matters of husbandry. The land again yields its fruits, the plant is made to grow, and the seed to flourish; but the restored prosperity is short-lived—short as the interval between seed-time and harvest; the day of imagined reaping would, it is said, be one of desperate sorrow. The same events, in the same succession—the occupation of Judea by the Jews, their temporary prosperity, the demolition of it in the great day

of the Lord—are recorded in other places: “At that time I will search Jerusalem with candles—their goods shall become a booty, and their houses a desolation; they shall also build houses, but not inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, but not drink the wine thereof. The great day of the Lord is near—that day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress,” Zeph. i. 12-15; “Ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them. For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: therefore the Lord saith thus, Wailing shall be in all streets; and in all vineyards shall be wailing: for I shall pass through thee, saith the Lord;—the day of the Lord is darkness and not light,” Amos v. 11-18. But the wrath of the Lord in that day will not be limited to the inhabitants of Judea, but will light also on the nations that are gathered against her. This is the subject of the remaining verses.—“Strange slips,” that is, foreign, and therefore valuable.—“Grief” or inheritance (margin). The meaning is, the day in which they hoped to possess their fruits.

12-14. *Woe to the multitude (or, noise) of many people, which make a noise like the noise of the seas; and to the rushing of nations, that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty (or, many) waters! The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters: but God shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing (or, thistle-down) before the whirlwind. And behold at evening-tide trouble; and before the morning he is not. This is the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us.*

These enemies are first described, and then their fate. The same figure is used in other descriptions of the host of many nations that are to be gathered against Jerusalem at last: “They shall roar against them like the roaring of the sea,” v. 30; “Their voice roareth like the sea,” Jer. vi. 23. But before the rebuke of the breath of the Lord, when he shall fight for Jerusalem, they shall be as

the chaff before the wind, as the thistle-down before the whirlwind: "The multitudes of all the nations that fight against Ariel (Jerusalem) shall be as a dream of a night vision," xxix. 7. The destruction of these enemies will be as sudden as complete (14). The night, as it were, will commence with trouble, but before the morning the foe will not exist. Elsewhere it is said, that after a day, as it were, of darkness, "at eventide there shall be light," Zech. xiv. 7. So their destruction is said to be quick, like that of wood by fire, or of a sheaf by the torch, Zech. xii. 6.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

ANOTHER nation is now introduced as the subject of prophecy. It is not named; and although its description is sufficiently precise to distinguish it when the events recorded shall have come to pass, yet it is at the same time so general, that all opinions that can yet be formed about it must be mere conjecture. The rule to fall back upon in regard to its elucidation is, "though it tarry, wait for it." The chapter has been to commentators one of the most puzzling within the compass of the Bible, and all manner of conjectures have been hazarded in regard to it. For these, see Barnes, Alexander, &c. The exegesis of the more difficult points is so little satisfactory—leaving the English version almost as it stands, or where it proposes trifling changes, if not mystifying the more, not elucidating—that it is needless to enter upon it. It is enough to know that this, like all the rest of Scripture, is light, and that at the proper time the light will appear.

The same obscurity, without the same reason, has been supposed to hang over the second of the nations men-

tioned in the chapter, and the same variety of conjecture has been exercised in regard to it. But if the view given of the previous chapter be that which is according to truth, there is little difficulty in the exposition of the remainder of this one, the analogy of Scripture furnishing a ready key with which to open it up. It is placed in the midst of prophecies foreshowing the destruction of the enemies of Judah and Israel, in all of which there is allusion to the reign of Christ in Zion after the destruction of these enemies. It might be presumed from its contextual connexion, that this chapter would introduce the same or collateral subjects, and on this natural supposition its exposition is easy. By the former of the two nations, is to be understood one of the nations that are to be gathered against Jerusalem at last; by the second of them is to be understood the people of Judah and Israel, against whom they are assembled.

1, 2. *Woe to the land shadowing with wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia: that sendeth ambassadors by the sea, even in vessels of bulrushes upon the waters, saying, Go, ye swift messengers, to a nation scattered and peeled (or, outspread and polished), to a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden down (or, a nation that meteth out, and treadeth down, or, a nation of line, line, and treading under foot), whose land the rivers have spoiled (or, whose land the rivers despise)!*

Leaving, therefore, the former description given in the first verse, and the first clause of the second, in the obscurity with which it is surrounded, and without making the vain attempt to throw light upon a passage where Scripture does not seem to do so,<sup>1</sup> and acknowledging the

<sup>1</sup> The word translated "wo" may be also rendered "ho," which may be the signification here, no judgment being pronounced in this case. The word rendered "shadowing," *לְרִיב* may also be translated "rustling." Ho to the land of rustling wings. This interpretation is generally preferred, and is understood of the noise made by armies.—"The rivers of Ethiopia (Cush) are supposed by some to be the Nile and its branches; by others, the Astaboras, Astapus, and Astasobas, mentioned by Strabo as the rivers of Meroe."—*Alexander*.



propriety of leaving such passages in obscurity, as is done in other parallel cases, as when one of the enemies of the Jews at last, or it may be these collectively, is described, in language equally vague, as "the northern army,"—what is the application of the second description in the chapter? who are meant by the nation scattered and peeled? It appears to point very decidedly to the Jewish nation. Of what people so much as of them can these things be said? None have been so scattered, still to exist, as they. A scattered nation seems a contradiction; in their case it is a fact. Who have been stripped as they have been? Other kingdoms have ascended by slow degrees to power, but they have been terrible from the beginning, God himself going before them and fighting for them. How, too, they have meted out (margin) and trodden down, the annihilation of those guilty nations who preceded them in Canaan testifies. The only difficulty, if it be one, is the application of the last clause to Judah. Of no land can it be said absolutely, that the rivers spoil it—these being the great vehicles of fertility; hence other translations have been adopted. The verb in the original occurs in no other passage. Lowth translates, "have nourished." Henderson and Alexander render it "divide." The margin renders it "despise." Any one of these translations is sufficiently applicable to Judea. Much of the chapter, as has been stated, and especially of the second verse, has been the subject of exegetical difficulty. The most important changes adopted by critics are noted in the marginal readings; but, after all, their variance from the received text is very unimportant.

3. *All ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, see ye, when he lifteth up an ensign on the mountains; and when he bloweth a trumpet, hear ye.*

It is this land of Judea which is to be the scene where an ensign is to be lifted up by Christ (see v. 26), which the inhabitants of the world shall see, and to which they

shall be gathered: "He (Christ) will lift up an ensign to the nations from far; and behold they shall come with speed swiftly." The abruptness with which the prophet calls upon all to behold one not before introduced lifting up an ensign, is the same, whatever view be taken of the passage. It is quite in keeping with his style, and with the fact as otherwise predicted.

*4, 5. For so the Lord said unto me, I will take my rest, and I will consider in my dwelling-place (or, regard my set dwelling) like a clear heat upon herbs (or, after rain), and like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest. For afore the harvest, when the bud is perfect, and the sour grape is ripening in the flower, he shall both cut off the sprigs with pruning-hooks, and take away and cut down the branches.*

It is in this land where the Lord will destroy terribly his and Judah's enemies. This, however, will not be until his forbearance shall be exhausted, and the measure of their iniquity filled up. Such seems to be the bearing of the 4th verse: "I will take my rest, I will consider in my dwelling-place." The same view is presented in other passages: "The kings of the earth shall set themselves, and the rulers shall take counsel together," in reference to the last combination of the nations of the earth against Christ and his people; but he is said to delay for a time his judgments; while they are maturing their plans, he will look on: "He that sitteth in the heavens will laugh," Ps. ii. So more expressly: "The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man; he shall cry, yea, roar. I have long holden my peace, I have been still and refrained myself; now will I cry like a travailing woman; I will destroy and devour at once; and I will bring the blind by a way that they know not," xlii. 13-16. There is great beauty in the figurative language which depicts in the text the divine sovereignty. As when the sun of summer shines brightly on the face of nature, and when the dewy cloud rests peacefully on the grass, vegetable growth is promoted, and everything bids fair for a

plenteous harvest ; so will the Lord look down from heaven on the enemies of Israel, when scheming and combining, and moving against her—he will not interpose—he will sit a calm spectator—he will suffer their plans to be carried out so far that they will be in the siege against Judah and Jerusalem—his people will be in the very jaws of the lion ; but then as utter and unexpected will be their overthrow, as would be the destruction of the vine harvest (5), if, after the grape was all but ripe, the sprigs were to be lopped off with pruning-hooks, and the branches cut down.

6. *They shall be left together unto the fowls of the mountains, and to the beasts of the earth : and the fowls shall summer upon them, and all the beasts of the earth shall winter upon them.*

The multitude of their slain, when, after his long-suffering is worn out, the Lord shall go forth against these nations preparatory to his being king over all the earth, is described here in striking language, which is also used in other passages in the same connexion. Thus, in the 39th chapter of Ezekiel, we read, “Thou (Israel’s enemies) shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel, thou, and all thy bands, and the people that is with thee : I will give thee to the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field, to be devoured. Seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may cleanse the land. And thou, Son of man, speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, assemble yourselves and come, gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice, that ye may eat flesh and drink blood.” That this judgment is not yet inflicted, but that it will accompany the settlement of the Jews in their own land, is evident from the conclusion of the same description. “Then,” when this tragedy has been enacted, “shall they know that I am the Lord their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen : but I have gathered them into their own land, and have left none of them any more

there ; neither will I hide my face any more from them : for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God." The same scene, on the same occasion, is pourtrayed in similar language in the vision of John, Rev. xix. 17-21.

*7. In that time shall the present be brought unto the Lord of hosts of a people scattered and peeled (or, outspread and polished), and from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto ; a nation meted out and trodden under foot, whose land the rivers have spoiled, to the place of the name of the Lord of hosts, the mount Zion.*

The interference of God in behalf of the Jewish nation, just described, preceding as it will do their conversion to him, will be followed by the bringing of presents to the Lord. This will be done by all flesh, so marked will then be the manifestation which he will make of himself, so that men shall be brought to say, " Verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth." " Because of thy temple at Jerusalem shall kings bring presents unto thee," Ps. lxxviii. 29. But not only will this be done by Gentile nations, but also by the Jewish nation then gathered, but once scattered and peeled. Of that time it is written of them, " From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia, my suppliants, even the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering," Zeph. iii. 10. Then God will no longer be robbed in tithes and offerings. Nay, themselves, and all their substance, will be the Lord's : " In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness unto the Lord ; yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts," Zech. xiv. 20, 21.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> " Of a people." In the Hebrew text עַם, with no preposition. In the Septuagint and Vulgate, there is the preposition, making the reading " from a people," as in the following clause. According to the English version, " the present of a people," Judah herself is the present brought to the Lord, as it is foretold, lxvi. 20 : " They shall bring all your brethren for an offering to the Lord out of all nations." For the meaning of the clause, " whose land the rivers have spoiled," see verse 2.



## CHAPTER XIX.

EGYPT, another of the enemies of Israel, forms the subject of this prophecy. That kingdom was distinguished by the antiquity of its dynasty, the learning of its people, the vastness of its population, and the richness of its soil. Intersected by the Nile, it owed its fertility to that river, and hence it is often introduced in the predictions respecting Egypt. After a long epoch of prosperity, the country has been successively the prey of Babylonians, Persians, Macedonians, Romans, Saracens, and Turks. There is much in the chapter that still remains unfulfilled; and the field of prophetic vision must be understood, as in the preceding cases, to embrace what is still future, as well as what is past, in the history of Egypt.

1. *The burden of Egypt. Behold, the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt; and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it.*

The judgments of Egypt first noted are such as relate to her social and political state. The Lord is represented as coming upon a swift cloud—a familiar Scripture figure. The two effects attributed to his approach indicate heavy judgment. The idols, as if conscious of impending destruction, are moved. It is said of them similarly in reference to a particular occasion, “I will kindle a fire in the houses of the gods of Egypt,” Jer. xliii. 12. Egypt was pre-eminently a land of idols; and the destruction of them—the most sacred and last defended of their property, would indicate overwhelming disaster. The same degree of judgment is intimated when it is said of her,

that her heart would melt. It is unnecessary to connect the fulfilment of this prediction with any particular invasion of Egypt. In other places, as in Jer. xlvi., the particular judgments foretold had the occasion and instrument of their fulfilment marked out ; but here the passage must be understood as widely as it is expressed ; as descriptive generally of the judgments of the land. Unlike such countries as Babylon and Moab, utter destruction was not denounced against, and has not befallen, Egypt. But although she still exists, it is only as the wreck of what she was—she is exactly described in the text, when represented not as dead, but only sick at heart, and therefore feeble and prostrate. She has been called the “ image ” of what she was. The condition of this enemy of Israel is peculiarly interesting, from Egypt, unlike the others, still preserving a place among the nations of the earth. The following testimony of Mr. Warburton illustrates the truth of the prediction, that the heart of Egypt has melted—that the spirit of Egypt has failed in the midst thereof. “ See him (the Egyptian) reduced from man’s proud estate—divested of all interest in the land, which is but farmed by a foreign adventurer—excluded from all share in politics—without a ray of freedom to light him onward through thought to action. Within the precincts of his harem alone he feels himself a man, and there all his thoughts and ambition dwell imprisoned. He dare not mount a horse, but it should draw upon him the attention of the tax-gatherer or his spies. The descendant of the desert chieftains betakes himself to a donkey, and goes forth to his counter—his only business ; or squats in a gloomy coffee-house—his only place of public resort. There he sits and smokes with downcast eyes.... Can this man’s fate be worse, or can invasion and change of government bring humiliation to this fallen race ? ”—*Crescent and the Cross*, vol. i. p. 122.

2-4. *And I will set (or, mingle) the Egyptians against the Egyptians :*

*and they shall fight every one against his brother, and every one against his neighbour; city against city, and kingdom against kingdom. And the spirit of Egypt shall fail (or, be emptied) in the midst thereof; and I will destroy (or, swallow up) the counsel thereof: and they shall seek to the idols, and to the charmers, and to them that have familiar spirits, and to the wizards. And the Egyptians will I give over (or, shut up) into the hand of a cruel lord; and a fierce king shall rule over them, saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts.*

The judgments are predicted as coming in the most terrible of shapes—in that of civil war. There have been such in different periods of her past history, as in those between Apries and Amasis, and in those which preceded the rule of Psammetichus; and there may be such in her future history. Or the passage may describe the general state of things with her to be one of disunion and discord—a state as fatal to the prosperity of a kingdom as the other—a state often very descriptive of Egypt. On this point Volney wrote, “In Egypt there is no middle class. An universal air of misery, manifest in all the traveller meets, points out to him *the rapacity of oppression, and the distrust attendant upon slavery*. Nothing is talked of but *intestine troubles*, the public misery,” &c. That nation which of old was distinguished for energy and wisdom, is said (3) to become spiritless, ignorant, so deluded as to have recourse to idols and magicians. There is no mistaking here the portrait of the Egyptians. Slothfulness and superstition have long been their characteristics. The description which follows (4), of a fierce and cruel king, has been applied to various of the oppressors of Egypt—to Psammetichus, to Sennacherib, to Nebuchadnezzar, to Cambyses, and others. It is quite appropriate to the character of her late despotic ruler; or it may refer to a king yet to arise. The difficulty is not to discover a ruler to whom the description may apply, but to say to which of a number whom it suits, it is most applicable. The oppression to which the Egyptian is subjected, as detailed by Warburton, is quite in harmony with the prediction,

that they would be given into the hands of a cruel lord. "The Pacha must have workmen for his factories, and labourers for his crops. Conscription for these purposes then seizes those whom that for war had spared ; and the fellah is torn from his home to work under the lash of a taskmaster, for a nominal wage of 2½d. a-day. This is sometimes two years in arrear, and even then paid half in kind, at the Pacha's valuation of whatever he has least occasion for. Such is the Egyptian peasant's lot, aggravated by privations that are incredible. If sick, he has no medicine or medical advice, and he dies ; if starving, he must steal from his own crop, which the Pacha has set his seal upon, and he suffers the bastinado. If a conscript for war, he is kept in camp until no longer fit for service, then thrown upon the world to beg and die."—*Crescent and the Cross*, vol. i. p. 112.

5-10. *And the waters shall fail from the sea, and the rivers shall be wasted and dried up. And they shall turn the rivers far away ; and the brooks of defence shall be emptied and dried up : the reeds and flags shall wither. The paper-reeds by the brooks, by the mouth of the brooks, and every thing sown by the brooks, shall wither, be driven away, and be no more (or, shall not be). The fishers also shall mourn, and all they that cast angle into the brooks shall lament, and they that spread nets upon the waters shall languish. Moreover, they that work in fine flax, and they that weave net-works (or, white works), shall be confounded. And they shall be broken in the purposes (or, foundations) thereof, all that make sluices and ponds for fish (or, of living things).*

The description of the political state of Egypt is followed, in these verses, by another, of the drying up of her rivers, and the consequent desolation of the land. There is foretold, first, the wasting or drying up of the Nile (5) and its branches. This has not yet been the case with the main channel of that river, but it is true of several of its branches, of which the Nile had many. Some of these, which once were filled, are reported by travellers to be now dry ; and their neighbourhood, where before there existed the most luxuriant vegetation, is described as



being amalgamated with the surrounding desert. One old bed of the Nile, for example, still remaining, but dry, is stated to be eighty miles from the nearest point of the river, and the interval between consists of sandy plains. One of its chief branches—the Pelusian, is choked up; and all that portion of the Delta, at one time watered by the river, and forming an immense plain of unsurpassed luxuriance, is now a desert without a streamlet. Wherever the branches of the Nile should thus be dried up, the prophecy proceeds to foretell that the reeds would wither (6), all vegetation would die (7), the fishers, both those who fished with the angle and with the net, and those also who wrought at net-making with flax (9), would mourn over the loss of their employment, for with the water the fish and the flax must cease, and those who made ponds for fish would labour in vain (10). This has all been accomplished in so far as the Nile has yet been dried up. Mounds of sand follow the retirement of the wasted waters, and speedily complete the picture of desolation which is here painted; and in those places, the reeds, the fish, and the flax, which are still found in the waters and on the banks of the streams which yet remain, and for which Egypt of old was famed, (Numb. xi. 5; 1 Kings x. 28), are no more.<sup>1</sup> In the case of the ancient papyrus, it

<sup>1</sup> Several of the renderings in the English translation of these verses have been disputed, and others preferred. The following are the most important changes generally adopted, which are evidently as applicable to the state of Egypt as the rendering of the common version:—"They shall turn the rivers far away," is rendered "the rivers shall become putrid," deriving from נִיחַ, to have an offensive smell—*Ges.* "The brooks of defence" is rendered "the brooks of Egypt," on the supposition that מִצֹּר stands for מִצְרַיִם. "The paper-reeds" is rendered "meadows," plural of עֵרְבָה, an open place, applied to the pastures on the banks—*Ges.* "Sluices—שְׁכָר—and ponds for fish," is rendered "ponds of fish for gain," as from שָׂכָר, to hire, instead of סָכַר, to enclose. Other expressions also have been disputed, but in regard to them, the common version seems as well supported as any of the multiplicity of proposed amendments.

is said that not a specimen of it is now to be found in Egypt.

11-15. *Surely the princes of Zoan are fools, the counsel of the wise counsellors of Pharaoh is become brutish : how say ye unto Pharaoh, I am the son of the wise, the son of ancient kings ? Where are they ? where are thy wise men ? and let them tell thee now, and let them know what the Lord of hosts hath purposed upon Egypt. The princes of Zoan are become fools, the princes of Noph are deceived ; they have also seduced Egypt, even they that are the stay (or, governors, or, corners) of the tribes thereof. The Lord hath mingled a perverse spirit (or, a spirit of perverseness) in the midst thereof : and they have caused Egypt to err in every work thereof, as a drunken man staggereth in his vomit. Neither shall there be any work for Egypt, which the head or tail, branch or rush, may do.*

In addition to the degeneracy of the people, and the drying up of the rivers, the folly of the rulers and counsellors is foretold as a source of wo to Egypt, another sad calamity to a kingdom. The princes of Zoan (Tanis) and Noph (Memphis) are described as giving irrational counsel (11), filling with adulation the ears of the king—Pharaoh being a common name of the Egyptian monarchs. In regard to some anticipated danger about which they are consulted, they are unable to advise ; they cannot tell what the purpose of the Lord respecting it is (12). They are represented as dupes themselves, and as leading the kingdom astray (13). This judgment of incapable and blinded rulers is said to be from the Lord's hand (14). It is he who makes these diviners mad, and turns these wise men backward, whose counsel leads Egypt astray, and fills her with consternation, so that neither prince nor people can devise or execute any scheme for her deliverance (15). All this has been fulfilled in the past history of Egypt. The regions of Zoan and Noph are desolate. The kingdom passed into the hands of other powers many hundred years before the Christian era. Since then her government has been the most extraordinary that the world has witnessed. After 1250, under the Mamalukes,

her rulers were for a long period chosen, not from natives of Egypt, but from foreign slaves; and until the accession of her late spirited ruler, himself a stranger, the nation continued to display that apathetic submission to her ignominious yoke which the prophet ascribes to her, and which might be expected of a nation of slaves, ruled over by those who themselves were slaves. "A more unjust and absurd constitution cannot be devised than that which condemns the natives of a country to perpetual servitude under the arbitrary dominion of strangers and slaves. Yet such has been the state of Egypt above five hundred years."—*Volney's Travels*. "Through the long reign of the Mamalukes, there was not one instance, I believe, of a son succeeding to his father's power and possessions. These Mamalukes were young Georgian or Circassian slaves, adopted by their owners, and adopting others in their turn; and this dynasty of foundlings ruled for many years in the land of the Pharaohs. They are now extinct. Some few survived the massacre under Mehemet Ali, but they have died away."—*Crescent and the Cross*, vol. i. p. 123.

16, 17. *In that day shall Egypt be like unto women; and it shall be afraid and fear, because of the shaking of the hand of the Lord of hosts, which he shaketh over it. And the land of Judah shall be a terror unto Egypt; every one that maketh mention thereof shall be afraid in himself, because of the counsel of the Lord of hosts, which he hath determined against it.*

Whether or not the accomplishment of the previous part of the prophecy is still progressing, or has been already completed, the remainder appears clearly to be yet unfulfilled. A cause of alarm, threatening such calamity as to fill the Egyptians with the timidity of women, is said to arise and overspread the land with dismay. The object of dread is Judah (17). There does not seem any occasion in past history when it could be said that the land of Judah was a terror to Egypt. Before it was reduced to

the degradation previously described, Judah itself was smitten by judgment, and could be a terror to no one. But the time is coming when the daughter of Zion shall "arise and thresh, and shall beat in pieces many people," Micah iv. 13: and in connexion with that time, and Judah's final restoration, it is written, "Egypt shall be a desolation because of the violence against the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in the land," Joel iii. 19; "I will bring them (the Jews) again also out of the land of Egypt, and the sceptre of Egypt shall depart away," Zech. x. 10, 11. It appears to be to that time when Judah shall rise to fame on the ruins of all her enemies, that reference is made, when it is said that the land of Judah shall be "a terror unto Egypt."

18. *In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language (or, the lip) of Canaan, and swear to the Lord of hosts: one shall be called, The city of destruction (or, of Heres, or, of the sun).*

The singular fact is here foretold of the use in five—representing probably a number—of the cities of Egypt, of the language of Judah, at the time denoted in the previous verses. A similar circumstance, which has certainly never occurred hitherto, is predicted by Zephaniah, only in that prophet the event is not limited to Egypt, and the language is not specified: "Then," in the day when the Lord will pour upon the nations his indignation, "will I turn to the people a pure<sup>1</sup> language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent," iii. 9. Here the language of Judah, that is, the Hebrew, and the pure language, appear to be identified. This change of language is said to be accompanied by a

<sup>1</sup> This expression may, however, be understood differently. The original, שִׁפְהַ בְּרוּרָה, signifies literally a pure lip, and may intimate merely the sanctification of the people when they shall be a holy nation, the high degree of their sanctification. "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man."



swearing to the Lord, a scriptural expression, which signifies a dedication to his service.<sup>1</sup> This is enlarged on in the following verses.

19-22. *In that day shall there be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the Lord. And it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto the Lord of hosts in the land of Egypt: for they shall cry unto the Lord because of the oppressors, and he shall send them a saviour, and a great one, and he shall deliver them. And the Lord shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation; yea, they shall vow a vow unto the Lord, and perform it. And the Lord shall smite Egypt; he shall smite and heal it: and they shall return even to the Lord, and he shall be entreated of them, and shall heal them.*

In many other passages is the same effect as here attributed to the judgments which shall mark the great day of the Lord. "The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the face of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God," lii. 10. And that Egypt will be of that number, is not only asserted in the text, but often elsewhere: "The sons of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee (Israel)," lx. 14; "The labour of Egypt shall come unto thee; they shall fall down unto thee, they shall make supplication unto thee, saying, Surely God is in thee," xlv. 14; "Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God," Ps. lxxviii. 31; "I will make mention of Rahab (Egypt)

<sup>1</sup> Many different views have been taken of the expression, the city of destruction. The textual is, however, the best supported translation, the marginal one requiring a change in the original, viz., *הָרָם* for *הָרָם*, which, however, is supported by a number of MSS. Some make it a proper name. Schmidius uses the word actively, making the meaning, a city of destruction to enemies. Gesenius translates, a city of deliverance, on the authority of the Syriac usage. Calvin very ingeniously understands the numbers in the two clauses of the verse as proportional, one denoting the proportion who would engage to be the Lord's, the other the proportion which would resist and perish—the proportion being five-sixths in the one case, and one-sixth in the other.

and Babylon to them that know me," Ps. lxxxvii. 4. One particular of the homage done to God is specified; there shall be an altar to the Lord, and a pillar or memorial. So it is written, when the name of God is great among the Gentiles, then "in every place incense and"—not the polluted bread, the lame, the blind, the sick, that were offered in the day of Israel's degeneracy, but—"a pure offering shall be offered unto the name of God, for his name shall be great among the heathen," Mal. i. 11. It is further foretold of this turning to the Lord in Egypt, that the means which shall effect it will be trial. Crushed beneath the heel of oppressors—who these will be is not said—they will cry to the Lord (20). He shall smite, but, unlike other oppressors, he will also heal (22). No satisfactory exposition of these verses can be given by any application to past history. They have been applied with great confidence to the relief afforded to the Jews when Alexander the Great seized possession of Egypt, who is represented as a saviour to them in comparison of preceding rulers. In this view the explanation of the context, particularly of the remainder of the passage, is sufficiently lame and forced. But, apart from this, what is here related is said not of the Jews in Egypt, but of the Egyptians themselves. "The Lord shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day;" and to them the incidents of the prophecy cannot hitherto be applied. The subsequent context, too, requires that the whole be regarded as yet to come. Among other things, it represents Israel, Egypt, and Assyria, as united in one kingdom formed of these three alone; an event clearly never yet realized, and which does not tally, either in its character or in its consequences, with the conquest of Egypt and Assyria by Alexander the Great, the only past period with which it has been compared. His kingdom was not, in a scriptural sense, a blessing in the midst of the earth.

23-25. *In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria; and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.*

The formation of a highway from Egypt to Assyria, effecting a close intercourse between these nations, is foretold. This has never yet been accomplished, or even attempted. There is not at this day any highway through the intervening desert between these countries any more than when the prophecy was uttered: but the prediction of a highway is express; and the least that it can denote is the existence of that traffic and intercourse which a highway indicates.—“The Egyptians shall serve<sup>1</sup> with the Assyrians.” Serve whom? Clearly Israel. What is said in other places of the two nations individually is here said of them collectively. The servitude of Egypt is implied when it is said, as already quoted, “the labour of Egypt and merchandise of Ethiopia shall come unto thee, and they shall be thine; they shall come after thee; in chains shall they come over, and they shall fall down unto thee,” xlv. 14; and the servitude of Assyria is implied when it is said, “they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword,” Micah v. 6. In the following passage both are conjoined as in the text: “The pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt shall depart away,” Zech. x. 11. These three kingdoms, united in one, are next said to be a blessing in the midst of the land,<sup>2</sup> that is, of the earth—of the world. Of their geographical position, it is here said that it is in the midst

<sup>1</sup> Shall serve, from שָׁרַף, used in the sense of serving, or being tributary to, (Gen. xiv. 4, xv. 14), as well as in the sense of worshipping, when God is the object.

<sup>2</sup> The land, אֶרֶץ; 1. the earth; 2. land.

of the earth ; of their political, or rather their moral influence, that it is a blessing. The former of these statements is evident. Every nation, in its ignorance, has fancied itself the centre of the world ; but if this question be determined by the means of intercourse with every other portion of the globe, the palm is due to Palestine ; and against her claim there can be no competitor, with Assyria annexed on the one side, and Egypt on the other. A glance at the map sets the question at rest. To this region all seas may be said to have access, and towards it almost all the great rivers of the world converge. There is no country to which access is so general, so easy, and so short. It is the heart with which lines of communication are laid down on the surface of the earth. This is the case very much with the land of Israel alone, but still more so with Egypt and Assyria tributary. With these there are connected the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, and the Caspian, the Nile, the Euphrates, the Tigris, &c., communicating alike on east, and west, and south, with all the quarters of the globe.—But it is stated further by the prophet, that the kingdom which is to occupy this central and favoured position in the earth will prove to it a blessing. Then the promise made to Abraham, and never yet accomplished, will be fulfilled, “ In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed,” Gen. xii. 3. So it is foretold, “ I will make them (the Jews) and the people about my hill (Zion) a blessing,” Ezek. xxxiv. 26 ; “ It shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing,” Zech. viii. 13. Salvation, in a far wider degree than has yet been experienced, will then be of the Jews. Their government will extend, and its effects will be experienced throughout the world : “ Out of Zion shall go forth the law ;” “ The work of righteousness shall be peace.” The principle of centralization has been ever found a powerful



one ; by it victories have been achieved and thrones overturned. It is the great political aim of the present day. In the text there is foretold a display of it, of which the world will be the scene, and Jerusalem the seat and centre, and the Jewish nation the instruments, and all flesh the objects, and righteousness and peace the blessed fruits, and the glory of God and of Christ the exalted end. That this passage is yet unfulfilled seems clear beyond dispute, from the last verse, for when in past time could the Lord have said, " Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands ?"

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## CHAPTER XX.

THIS brief chapter has been understood by commentators to have received its accomplishment in historical incidents supposed to have occurred at the time of its delivery, or soon after. But this view requires much to be taken for granted as matter of history, for which there exists no evidence ; as, for instance, that at the period of the siege of Ashdod the Jews were contemplating an alliance with Egypt and Ethiopia against Assyria, and that these nations were reduced by Assyria to that degree of degradation which is here described, suppositions of which there exists no proof. Besides, some particulars in the passage, and the analogy of Scripture, seem to point to a fulfilment yet future.

1-6. *In the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod, (when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him), and fought against Ashdod, and took it ; at the same time spake the Lord by Isaiah the son of Amoz (or, by the hand of Isaiah), saying, Go and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins, and put off thy shoe from thy foot : and he did so, walking naked and barefoot. And the Lord said, Like as my servant Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign and wonder upon Egypt and*

*upon Ethiopia ; so shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians prisoners (or, the captivity of Egypt), and the Ethiopians captives, young and old, naked and barefoot, even with their buttocks uncovered, to the shame (or, nakedness) of Egypt. And they shall be afraid and ashamed of Ethiopia their expectation, and of Egypt their glory. And the inhabitants of this isle (or, country) shall say in that day, Behold, such is our expectation, whither we flee for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria ; and how shall we escape ?*

The date of the prophecy is first announced. It was communicated to Isaiah in the year of the siege and capture of Ashdod by Tartan, but no hint is given that it related to the events of the siege, or to the circumstances of the Jews at that particular period. Whether it does so or not must be deduced from the terms of the prophecy itself. Ashdod, or Azotus, was an important city on the Philistian border of Judea. Tartan is mentioned, 2 Kings xviii. 17, as a general of Sennacherib. Some suppose Sargon to be another name for Sennacherib, which is possible enough, if there be truth in the statement of Jerome, that he had seven names ; but more probably he was another king who reigned in Assyria either immediately before or after that monarch.

In a previous chapter, viii. 18, the prophet says, “ Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel for the Lord of hosts ;” and here there is furnished an illustration of this. He is directed (2) to lay aside the lower part of his dress and his shoes, which he does, walking without the sackcloth of his loins and the sandals of his feet. The word “ naked ” is evidently qualified by what precedes ; he walked naked only in so far as the loins were concerned. It must be understood relatively, not absolutely, else the expression barefoot is superfluous. The language does not mean that he laid aside the characteristic prophetic garb, which was made of sackcloth or hair ; it probably covered the whole body, and the casting it off did not necessarily imply shame ; much less does the language

imply nakedness absolutely. Strict adherence to the text—understanding by it neither no nakedness at all, nor absolute nakedness, but that of the loins and of the feet—makes the act of the prophet exactly symbolical of what is threatened to the Egyptians in the 4th verse. He is enjoined to continue the custom for three years (3). To remove the difficulty presented by the injunction of so singular a requirement for so long a period, the words “for three years” have been connected with Egypt and Ethiopia, as intimating that, in that time, these nations would be subdued, or that their subjection would last for three years. But the necessity is not sufficient to justify departure from the natural and obvious meaning of the passage. The warning, understood literally as extending over three years, would not be longer continued than others that are recorded, nor so long; that addressed to the antediluvian world extended over a period of 120 years. The adoption of the punctuation of the Massorah and reading, “Isaiah hath walked naked and barefoot, a three years’ sign and wonder,” does not alter the case; that just signifies a sign and wonder for three years. His walking in the way enjoined is described as symbolizing the captivity and disgrace of the Egyptians and Ethiopians by the king of Assyria. It is usual to suppose the prediction in the 4th verse to have been fulfilled in some subjugation of these nations by the King of Assyria, which occurred soon after their humiliation was foretold: but on two accounts we may be warranted in regarding the fulfilment of that and the following verses as yet to come; the one, that no past fulfilment of them is recorded in history; the other, that parallel prophecies seem yet unfulfilled. It is not likely, it is not in accordance with analogy, that the accomplishment of a prophecy, to which the attention of the Jews was so pointedly called, should have passed by unnoticed in history. So extraordinary, and humiliating, and protracted a symbol, requires a char-

acter equally marked in the thing symbolized. It was incomparably the most striking ever furnished to the Jewish nation by Isaiah or his children, and might therefore be supposed to refer to something more eventful than an unnoticed subjection to a power with which they had thought of forming an alliance. But further, in coincidence with the subjects of this chapter, it is foretold of Assyria, that it will yet excite the fears of Israel, and move her to look to allies for help. Of a time yet future, it is said of Israel, that they were "ready to perish in Assyria," xxvii. 13; "that they shall tremble as a dove out of the land of Assyria," Hos. xi. 11; see chapter x. 5. The quarter, too, to which it is said in other prophecies that they will look for aid, will be that indicated in this chapter, viz., Egypt. Of a time also yet to come, it is said of Israel, "Wo to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of me; that walk to go down into Egypt, to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt," xxx. 1, 2. It is also foretold that captivity and degradation will yet overtake these nations, and that Israel will be ashamed of them (5, 6): "The strength of Pharaoh shall be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion," xxx. 3; "Thou also shalt be ashamed of Egypt," Jer. ii. 36; "The sword shall come upon Egypt, and your pain shall be in Ethiopia, when the slain shall fall in Egypt, and they shall take away her multitude, and her foundations shall be broken down," Ezek. xxx. 4. Against explaining this prophecy, therefore, of past events, there is the objection, that no fulfilment of it is recorded either in sacred or profane history; and in favour of explaining it of events yet to come, there is the presumption of its coincidence with similar unfulfilled predictions.



## CHAPTER XXI.

BABYLON is evidently (ver. 2, 9) the subject of the first of the prophecies recorded in this chapter. The style is peculiar, but not uncommon with Isaiah. There is given in language in the highest degree poetical, forcible, and abrupt, a scenic representation of Babylon's fall, while at the same time there is presented the utmost accuracy of description, the fulfilment answering most minutely to the prediction. The whole presents to the eye a very graphic and lively, but yet faithful picture of the suddenness and terribleness of the capture of the city by Cyrus, and of its final overthrow.

1. *The burden of the desert of the sea. As whirlwinds in the south pass through ; so it cometh from the desert, from a terrible land.*

The title is undoubtedly to be applied to Babylon, although how it should be designated "the desert of the sea," is doubtful. The reference seems to be to her condition prospectively ; she is described not as she was, but as she would become.—The aspect of these desolate countries of the east appears to suggest the comparison. "It (Scyala) is surrounded on all sides by a very wide and lonely desert, which recalled forcibly that sublime expression of Isaiah, 'The burden of the desert of the sea ;' and lo, towering above that sea, comes sailing a ship of the desert, with its pilot Arab."—*Crescent and the Cross*, vol. i. p. 334.—The expression sea is applied to large rivers, and was particularly applicable to the Euphrates, which appears not to have flowed in a very regular chan-

nel, but to have formed, especially when swollen, a wide expanse. The impending destruction is described as sudden and overwhelming, like that caused by the whirlwinds of Arabia, which lay to the south of Judea.

2. *A grievous (or, hard) vision is declared unto me ; The treacherous dealer dealeth treacherously, and the spoiler spoileth. Go up, O Elam ; besiege, O Media : all the sighing thereof have I made to cease.*

The terribleness of the visitation on Babylon is further described as being the assault of one treacherous and powerful foe upon another, of one spoiler upon another, that is, of the Medes and Persians upon Babylon. The prophet hears the command issued to the former, by the Lord, to advance ; and the sorrows caused in the earth by the oppressions of Babylon are said to cease. Elam, a province of Persia, is here put for the whole kingdom.

3, 4. *Therefore are my loins filled with pain : pangs have taken hold upon me, as the pangs of a woman that travaileth : I was bowed down at the hearing of it ; I was dismayed at the seeing of it. My heart panted (or, my mind wandered), fearfulness affrighted me : the night of my pleasure hath he turned (or, put) into fear unto me.*

The prophet, represented as transported to the scene of judgment, describes himself as overwhelmed with dismay at the prospect of those calamities into which Babylon is on the eve of being plunged,—as realizing the horrors of that night of revelry on which Cyrus entered the city, and which was turned into a night of wo. There is in these verses evident allusion to the familiar circumstances of the capture of the city on a night set apart for mirth and selected for that purpose, and so successfully, that the army was introduced within, without opposition, by the channel of the river, which had been diverted from its course. There is probably similar allusion in the following verse to the royal feast described in Daniel v.

5. *Prepare the table, watch in the watch-tower, eat, drink : arise, ye princes, and anoint the shield.*

The imagined security of the inhabitants of the city is here depicted with great vividness and force. They are described as ordering the preparation of the feast, and as setting the watch, that they might riot without alarm; and then, when the noise of the tumult without reaches their ear, as called to arise and prepare for battle.—The expression, “anoint the shield,” is understood to refer to the shields’ being made of skin, which would require the occasional application of oil to keep them serviceable.

6-10. *For thus hath the Lord (or, Adonai) said unto me, Go, set a watchman, let him declare what he seeth. And he saw a chariot with a couple of horsemen, a chariot of asses, and a chariot of camels; and he hearkened diligently with much heed. And he cried, A lion (or, cried as a lion): My lord, I stand continually upon the watch-tower in the day-time, and I am set in my ward whole nights (or, every night); and, behold, here cometh a chariot of men, with a couple of horsemen. And he answered and said, Babylon is fallen, is fallen; and all the graven images of her gods (or, Elohi) he hath broken unto the ground. O my threshing, and the corn (or, son) of my floor: that which I have heard of the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, have I declared unto you.*

The prolongation of Babylon’s disasters, her coming downfall and desolation, are now presented under another view. One is represented as being directed to ascend the watch-tower,<sup>1</sup> and report what he sees; and he reports that he sees three chariots<sup>2</sup> or troops; one of horsemen, the next of asses, the third of camels. As it is not the capture of Babylon by Cyrus that is alone or specially the subject of the prophecy, but the gradual and final ex-

<sup>1</sup> The watchman here, and in other places, is evidently an imaginary character, introduced in order to give greater expression and force to the passage. Such poetic licenses are common in every language. That there is nothing more intended is still more apparent from Hab. ii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> רֶכֶב, from רָכַב, “to ride,” rendered by *Ges.*, 1. “cavalry;” 2. “a chariot.” It is a word which bears various meanings in Scripture. In 2 Sam. viii. 4, “David houghed the chariots,” it signifies the horses in them. In ch. x. 18, “David killed of the Syrians 700 chariots,” it signifies the men belonging to them.

tion of the city, as appears from the 9th and 10th verses, which were not realized until long after, it is not necessary to consider the three chariots or troops as representing the component parts of one army; they may be understood as symbolizing the character of the successive foes who would possess Babylon. The two former may denote the more regular armies in which many of them would be employed, as was particularly the case in the army of Cyrus, of which cavalry formed a large proportion, according to the prophecy, "they shall ride upon horses;" while the camels, "the ships of the desert," may denote the more utter desolation of the country, to which, at a later period, it was reduced, when it passed into the possession of the Arabs, with whom the camel takes the place of the horse and the ass.—The expression, "couple of horsemen," may be translated, as it is by Barnes, "horsemen two abreast." This, a most unlikely way of assaulting a city, was actually the case, Xenophon recording that the Persian army advanced to Babylon ranked two by two, and in this order entered the city by the channel of the river. The watchman is next represented (8) as announcing the approach of the foe with the fury and power of the lion (margin). The previous verse states what he saw; this one contains his announcement of what he saw. At the same time, in support of the terrible tidings—that they might carry the conviction of their truth along with them—he asserts very strongly the vigilance of his protracted watch. It is the approach of hosts, characterized by the number of their cavalry (9)—descriptive, therefore, of the Medes and Persians—which is seen. But more is witnessed than this the first of the storms which shattered Babylon, the end of her career is also revealed. She is seen fallen in the very dust, her gods broken on the ground, and she lying smitten and bruised like corn on the threshing-floor. She who smote the people in wrath, with a continual stroke



(xiv. 6), is herself subjected to protracted judgment (10). This language evidently does not correspond with the first capture of the city by Cyrus, and hence it seems better to understand the vision while commencing with that event, as yet including more, and as embracing the whole measure of her judgments. She appears to have presented to the eye of the prophet, at least in the close of the scene, not the spectacle which she presented after her first invasion, but such as she presents now in her utter desolation. She was not fallen when taken by Cyrus, nor were her gods broken then, nor was her threshing over; on the contrary, she retained her magnificence for ages after. The same language is employed in other places to describe her final ruin: "Babylon is taken, Bel is confounded, Merodach is broken in pieces; her idols are confounded, her images are broken in pieces," Jer. l. 1. "The daughter of Babylon is like a threshing-floor, it is time to thresh her; yet a little while, and the time of her harvest shall come," Jer. li. 33. Of the loss of her idols, history furnishes striking evidence. Of Ptolemy Energetes it is related, that among the spoil which he brought with him from Babylon to Egypt, there were 2500 idols.

11, 12. *The burden of Dumah. He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye; return, come.*

The prophecy contained in these two verses, regarding Dumah or Idumea, is exceedingly obscure, from its brevity and vagueness. It represents the inhabitants of Seir, a mountainous region in Idumea, as calling out, "What of the night?"—a word which is a common and natural scriptural symbol of distress and calamity, as in Micah iii. 6. On no country have the judgments of the Almighty fallen more heavily than on Idumea: "My sword shall come down upon Idumea." The complete and ultimate

outpouring of her curse is said to be followed by the return of the divine favour to Israel: "I will make myself known among them (Israel), when I have judged thee. When the whole earth rejoiceth I will make thee desolate," Ezek. xxxv. 11, 14. The fate of these two countries is thus connected; and as if wearying of their long desolation, a cry is represented, by poetical license, as proceeding from the one to the other, "What of the night?" that is, How much of the night of desolation is yet gone—when shall it be past? No direct and positive answer is returned. If it was not for the Apostles to know the times and the seasons, still less was it for guilty Idumea. The answer, so far as it goes, is unfavourable: "The morning cometh, and also the night;" that is, it is still the time for the watchman to occupy his post; he must do so long, as in verse 8, the period of desolation is not yet over. But the inquirer is not left wholly without encouragement—he is invited to continue his inquiries, to return. He is pressed to do so, the invitation is repeated, Come again.

13-17. *The burden upon Arabia. In the forest in Arabia shall ye lodge, O ye travelling companies of Dedanim. The inhabitants of the land of Tema brought (or, bring ye) water to him that was thirsty, they prevented with their bread him that fled. For they fled from the swords (or, for fear, or, from the face), from the drawn sword, and from the bent bow, and from the grievousness of war. For thus hath the Lord (or, Adonai) said unto me, Within a year, according to the years of an hireling, and all the glory of Kedar shall fail; and the residue of the number of archers (or, bows), the mighty men of the children of Kedar, shall be diminished: for the Lord God of Israel hath spoken it.*

This concluding prediction relates to Arabia, which bordered on Idumea. Several incidents are stated to occur in the land, which are descriptive of the oppressions to which it would be subjected. First, the Dedanim travelling in companies, or caravans, as was usual, are represented as having to betake themselves to the forest (13), instead of resting peacefully at the halting-places on their

route. Who these Dedanim were is uncertain. Evidently they were a neighbouring tribe with Edom and Teman, as both here and elsewhere (Jer. xlix. 8) the three are mentioned in juxtaposition. Next the inhabitants of Tema (one of the sons of Ishmael), an Arab tribe, are described (14, 15) as bringing water and food to others in the land, deprived by hostile invaders, from whom they fled, of the necessities of life. The word "prevent" is here used, as frequently elsewhere in Scripture, in the old English sense of "go before," equivalent, in this instance, "to supply." The devastation of the country is then foretold in plain language. It is said that within an exact year, see xvi. 14, Kedar (another son of Ishmael, representing another Arab tribe, or here, perhaps, as in other passages, the whole land of Arabia) would be made waste (16), and her archers, the only class of warriors, would be made few (17). It is not the utter annihilation of the tribe or of the nation that is here foretold, but only the great reduction of their numbers. So when the praise of the Lord shall be sung from the ends of the earth, "Kedar shall be a wilderness," but not the scene of utter desolation; for the cities and villages thereof "shall lift up their voice," xlii. 11. It is almost needless to say how truly the prediction has been verified. Kedar is a wilderness—its glory is brought low; but its population, though few, are not extinct. It is still the country of the wandering Arab.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

THIS chapter has been generally supposed to describe two separate prophecies, the former terminating with the 14th verse. But as there is nothing to indicate the commencement of a new prediction, and as there can scarcely

be said to be a change of subject except from the general to the particular—from the case of the guilt and punishment of the whole nation of the Jews to that of one of their rulers, there seems to be no necessity sufficient to justify the departure from the natural impression made by the perusal of the chapter, that it forms one prophecy. The arguments for the continuity of a passage should have the benefit of any doubt, as it is generally safer to err on the side of connecting than of detaching Scripture. This, together with the preceding and the subsequent chapters, contains a series of “burdens” or oppressive judgments, and this chapter embraces one of these. There is no intimation of a new “burden” at verse 15. A second perplexing question to which the chapter gives rise is, To what siege of Jerusalem does it refer? Some circumstances, as the subsequent reference to Eliakim and Shebna, officers of Hezekiah, and the parallelism between what is predicted (9-11), and the measures adopted by Hezekiah to secure water for the city, and to take it from the Assyrians, appear to connect it with the siege on that occasion: while, on the other hand, the escape of Jerusalem by the removal of the army of Sennacherib, does not permit the prediction of the calamities here foretold to be limited to her condition then. The safer way, in the circumstances, is to consider the prophecy as a general one, embracing what occurred in the siege by the Assyrian army, but not confined to that event.

1-3. *The burden of the valley of vision. What aileth thee now, that thou art wholly gone up to the house-tops? Thou that art full of stirs, a tumultuous city, a joyous city: thy slain men are not slain with the sword, nor dead in battle. All thy rulers are fled together, they are bound by the archers (or, of the bow): all that are found in thee are bound together, which have fled from far.*

The title of the prophecy is indefinite, but is proved by the context to be descriptive of Jerusalem. It may be called a valley, from its being surrounded by hills, and



the valley of vision, from its being the place where the presence and will and purposes of the Almighty have been revealed; or, more simply, Jerusalem may be so designated here, from its being the place where the visions of the prophet were witnessed. The vision opens with presenting, as it were, a panorama of the city thrown into a state of confusion and alarm, such as might be caused by the approach of an enemy. It is just such a scene, as is remarked by Alexander, as, making allowance for the difference in the construction of the houses of the East, would be presented by a modern city filled with excitement, whether from grief or fear, or any other cause. The seeming contradiction of being a joyous city (2) in the midst of general disorder, is explained by what is said in verse 13, of part of the population abandoning themselves to revelry. The same thing was illustrated on the occasion of the first capture of Babylon, and occurs in similar circumstances still; for in a time of danger, in the case of shipwreck for instance, some will be found taking advantage of the general confusion, to riot in gluttony and intoxication. It is represented as an aggravation of the calamity of the city, that the slain had not perished by the sword, but by some other cause, such as pestilence or famine, as was the case in the sieges by Nebuchadnezzar and Titus. There is no reason to suppose that this was fulfilled in the instance of the invasion by the Assyrians, although the Jews were tauntingly told that this would be the case: "Doth not Hezekiah persuade you to give over yourselves to die by famine and thirst?" Another feature in the calamities of the city (3) is the unsuccessful flight and capture of her rulers, and of the inhabitants, many of whom had come from a distance to Jerusalem for safety—had fled from far—a picture which has often been realized in the successive subjugations of the city.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The expression "by the archers," literally, "from the bow," has been

4, 5. *Therefore said I, Look away from me; I will weep bitterly (or, I will be bitter in weeping), labour not to comfort me, because of the spoiling of the daughter of my people. For it is a day of trouble, and of treading down, and of perplexity by the Lord God of hosts in the valley of vision, breaking down the walls, and of crying to the mountains.*

The prophet having portrayed the scene which he beheld in vision, now describes its saddening effects upon himself, as is common with Isaiah, and in which he resembled our merciful High-Priest when he wept over the city. His description of the distresses of the Jews, to which he immediately returns, resembles, while it exceeds, that put into the lips of Hezekiah in regard to Assyria: "This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of blasphemy;" and found many a more apposite and forcible verification in succeeding sieges and captures of the city. This description of its judgments is followed by an account of the enemies gathered against Jerusalem.

6, 7. *And Elam bare the quiver with chariots of men and horsemen, and Kir uncovered (or, made naked) the shield. And it shall come to pass, that thy choicest (or, the choice of thy) valleys shall be full of chariots, and the horsemen shall set themselves in array at (or, toward) the gate.*

Elam or Persia is said to be there, and Kir or Media, and that in such numbers, that the surrounding valleys are filled with chariots, bowmen, and cavalry, in which the military forces of these nations chiefly consisted. Kir is supposed to denote a region on the river Kyros (*Kyros*), near the Caspian Sea, and here to represent Assyria. Kir was subject to Assyria, as appears from the circumstance of Tiglath-pileser sending his prisoners from Damascus into captivity there, 2 Kings xvi. 7. Persia was in the same condition, and there might be men from both regions among the forces of Sennacherib. The uncovering the shield has reference to the *involutra*

variously understood, as in the sense of "without the bow;" that is, not in battle, or without drawing the bow, or restrained from using it.

*clypeorum*, and the *tegimenta scutis detrahenda*, of which Cicero and Cæsar speak, which were leathern cases used to protect the shield, or keep it bright.—*Alexander*.

8-11. *And he discovered the covering of Judah, and thou didst look in that day to the armour of the house of the forest. Ye have seen also the breaches of the city of David, that they are many; and ye gathered together the waters of the lower pool: and ye have numbered the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses have ye broken down to fortify the wall. Ye made also a ditch between the two walls for the water of the old pool: but ye have not looked unto the maker thereof, neither had respect unto him that fashioned it long ago.*

These verses contain a description of the steps taken by the Jews for their defence<sup>1</sup>—of their looking to the armour which was kept in the house of the forest, which was built by Solomon: “He built also,” it is written, “the house of the forest of Lebanon,” 1 Kings vii. 2, so named, either because erected upon Lebanon, or more probably because built of its famed cedars. It was apparently intended for an arsenal, 1 Kings x. 16, or was afterwards converted into one. The prophet describes next the examination by the Jews of the breaches on the wall, in order to their repair (9); their looking to the condition of the reservoirs; refitting one (9), and forming or securing another (11, first clause); and their determining what houses should be taken down for the fortifications of the wall (10). The incidents named in these verses correspond exactly with what was done by Hezekiah on the approach of the Assyrian army, 2 Chron.

<sup>1</sup> The expression “he discovered,” from גָּלָה, to uncover, make bare, is so indefinite, that very different constructions have been put upon it. It is enough to understand it in as general a sense as it bears. God himself was peculiarly the defence of Judah; and by permitting the invasion of the land, and the assault of the city, he exposed her to injury—he took away her covering. It has been ingeniously understood of the opening the eyes of the Jews themselves to their position, which harmonizes well with the context, which describes the measures adopted by them for their safety. The word is employed in the same sense, although with a different grammatical usage, in Numbers xxii. 31.

xxxii. 2. But these steps for the safety of the city would be so obvious and necessary, that they may have been taken equally on other occasions of invasion. The coincidence between what is here foretold, and what has occurred already, does not exclude all reference to what is yet to come in the history of Israel. There may be yet future illustrations of the truth of these predictions in the day when all nations shall be gathered against Jerusalem. Assyria and Persia are yet to be numbered among her enemies, xxx. 31 ; Ezek. xxxviii. 5. And the day of trouble here described agrees with the terrible day of the Lord, Zeph. i. 14, 15. But while the Jews would use the means of defence, it is said of them (11) that they would forget Him who only could make these means effectual—without whose help their exertions would be fruitless. They are yet to look to Egypt for help, chap. xx.

12-14. *And in that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth : and behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine : let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die. And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord God (or, Adonai Jehovah) of hosts.*

Not only is it said that such a spirit would result in the failure of their own schemes, it would also be the disappointing of God's purposes. His object by such infictions, his expectation at such a season, is the production of repentance (12) ; but instead of this the prophet sees mirth and revelling (13), and a state of things the very contrary of what God sought to impart,—the evil aggravated, not mitigated, by his judgments ; and instead of any sign of turning to him who smote them, a spirit of defiance of him to the very uttermost, and of sinful indulgence to the very last,—“Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.” Other passages show that the depra-



yity of the nation will be maintained to the very last : " It shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees : that say in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil," Zeph. i. 12. So deep-rooted is this defiance of the Divine judgments, that it is said (14), that nothing but the destruction of the nation would overcome it. This cannot, however, imply the extinction of the nation. Its perpetuity is guaranteed by the covenant of God : " As the new heavens and the new earth shall remain before me, so shall your seed and your name remain," lxvi. 22. The expression " die," must therefore be understood of the feebleness to which Judah would be reduced by her judgments. As a kingdom, it may be said that she is dead, her condition has been worse than death. In the expression there is probably reference to her last judgments—to the " lower deep" to which she will descend at the time when " the Lord shall wash away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall purge the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning." The same inefficacy of the divine judgments, until the last of them shall be expended—until she shall die—is similarly described in Ezekiel : " Because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee," xxiv. 13.

15-19. *Thus saith the Lord God (or, Adonai Jehovah) of hosts, Go, get thee unto this treasurer, even unto Shebna, which is over the house, and say, What hast thou here, and whom hast thou here, that thou hast hewed thee out a sepulchre here, as (or, O) he that heweth him out a sepulchre on high, and that graveth an habitation for himself in a rock ? Behold, the Lord will (or, the Lord who covered thee with an excellent covering, and clothed thee gorgeously, shall surely) carry thee away with a mighty captivity (or, the captivity of a man), and will surely cover thee. He will surely violently turn and toss thee like a ball into a large country (or, large of spaces) : there shalt thou die, and there the chariots of thy glory shall be the shame of thy lord's*

*house. And I will drive thee from thy station, and from thy state shall he pull thee down.*

The removal of Shebna from the supervision of the palace, and the accession of Eliakim to his office, occupy the remainder of the chapter. This description of the fate of the guilty ruler succeeds naturally to that of the city, whose wickedness, it may be supposed, he encouraged, instead of seeking to suppress. The prophet is directed to go to him to warn him of his end. He reproves him (16) for his pride and presumption in the erection of a sepulchre, with which he was engaged. Such tombs hewn in the rock were common, and still exist in the neighbourhood. It is not said where the guilt lay in this proceeding of Shebna: it has been supposed, in his selecting a place allotted to kings or holy men, or in the circumstance of his doing so, although a foreigner. He is threatened with banishment (17), and that carried out in a sudden and violent manner (18), and the consequent loss of station and of all its advantages. An obvious difficulty in the way of the application of these threatenings to Shebna is, that the degradation here indicated was not undergone by him. He is always mentioned as an important personage among Hezekiah's officers, although inferior to Eliakim, 2 Kings xviii. 37. The difficulty has been met, although scarcely removed, by the conjecture that it was at a subsequent period that his degradation was completed; or by the very improbable supposition that Shebna the scribe was a different person. The verb, "shall carry thee away," does not necessarily express the idea of captivity, but merely of expulsion. The allusion, in the first clause of the 18th verse, is to the act of throwing a projectile from a sling. Lowth's translation is, "He will whirl thee round and round, and cast thee away like a ball."

20-25. *And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah; and I will clothe him with thy*

*robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand; and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder: so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house. And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons (or, instruments of viols). In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, shall the nail that is fastened in the sure place be removed, and be cut down, and fall; and the burden that was upon it shall be cut off: for the Lord hath spoken it.*

The succession of Eliakim is now described. He is represented as being invested with all the badges of authority worn by his predecessor, with the official robes and the girdle—the last an important article of eastern dress—and as proving, in contrast with the former unworthy ruler, a father to the people. The former verse, the 22d, appears to be an enlargement of that expression in the preceding, “I will commit the government into his hand.” The language of this verse implies, that the individual who was “over the house” was viceroy of the kingdom,—exercised regal authority. Further, it is said of his possession of power that, unlike that of his predecessor, it would be permanent (23). He would be a nail fastened securely—a figure familiar to the inhabitants of the East, being borrowed from the custom of having large nails or spikes fastened into the walls of houses to strengthen them, and to suspend articles of household use or ornament. The same idea is expressed by calling him a throne or seat. As such, he would be the upholder, not only of the honour and privileges of the nation, but particularly of his father's house,—the house of David. But while such would be the case with Eliakim, it would be otherwise with his predecessor, to whose fate the prophecy reverts (25). Shebna, too, had looked secure as a nail in the wall, but he had become high-minded, and the nail is cut down and falls.

Such is the import of the passage when restricted to the individuals Shebna and Eliakim. But this view of it alone will scarcely appear satisfactory. As there is no hint in sacred or profane history of disgrace so extreme befalling the former, so neither is there any allusion to benefits so signal having been conferred on the nation by the latter. Limited to the individuals, the whole description appears overwrought ; the mind is forced to the conclusion, that a deeper significance lies under the surface. The express specification of names requires that the passage be regarded as describing incidents in the lives of these individuals—as announcing to the Jews their deliverance from one evil ruler, and the accession of a better. But the spirit and language of the prophecy seem to require that it be understood as contemplating also the overthrow of greater oppressors, and the advent of a greater benefactor. It is not uncommon with the prophet, in his description of present or near calamities or deliverances, to pass from them to others which are future ; in this way, not taking from, but adding to the present lesson taught the Jews, by assuring them that the help extended to them, or the blessings heaped on them, on any particular occasion, were but emblems of greater things that would be done for them when they should turn unto the Lord. While, therefore, on this occasion, Isaiah may be regarded as predicting the succession of a good to an unfaithful ruler, he does so in language which is also calculated to lead their thoughts to the Mightier One who was to come. In this view of it, the passage is the parallel of many others. Thus, in Isaiah ix. 5, referring to the final destruction of Israel's enemies, there is predicted first the removal of the Shebna of Israel, "Thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor ;" and then the reign of her Eliakim, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." The attributes here as-



cribed to Eliakim are elsewhere specially addressed to Christ. Of him it is said by God, "Behold my servant." The girdle of authority shall be given him, but it will be one of "righteousness and faithfulness." "The government" of the new kingdom, the kingdom of righteousness, "will be upon his shoulders." Eliakim might be the father of his country for a little, but he shall be called "the Everlasting Father." It is he who, pre-eminently and alone, has "the key of David; who openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth." Like a nail in a sure place, "he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end." He shall be the support of the glory of his father's house: "The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David, to establish it with judgment and with justice." When Christ shall thus occupy the throne of David, when he shall reign in Sion, and before his ancients gloriously, the oppressors of Judah, though like a nail they seemed firmly fixed, shall be cut down and fall. This view of the latter part of the chapter confirms the view given of what precedes, that much of it is still prospective. In language adapted to events in the history of the Jews then at hand, her final trials and deliverance are foretold. The field of vision embraces both.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

TYRE, which forms the subject of this chapter, was a city of Phœnicia, long eminently distinguished for its commerce. It is known by the names of Old Tyre and Insular Tyre—the former built on the edge of the Mediterranean, and the latter on a small island situated three-

fourths of a mile from the shore. It was a city of great strength, particularly after its removal from the mainland to the island, and it suffered repeated and tedious sieges by Shalmaneser, Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander, Antigonus, and others. When besieged by Alexander, it was the well-known scene of one of the most Herculean tasks recorded, viz., the formation, with the ruins of the old city, of a mound reaching from the shore to insular Tyre, by means of which its capture was effected. There is no vestige of the former city existing, and a miserable fishing village is all that remains, except ruins, on the site of the latter. There has been the same diversity of opinion as to what siege particularly the prophecy applies, as in the case of the previous prophecy. As in that instance, the safer way is to regard it as a general prediction, with occasional allusions, perhaps, to particular sieges.

1. *The burden of Tyre. Howl, ye ships of Tarshish ; for it is laid waste, so that there is no house, no entering in : from the land of Chittim it is revealed to them.*

The desolation of Tyre is set forth by describing, with much vivacity and force, the distress of her colonies mourning over the ruin of the parent city. First, the ships of Tarshish are apostrophized and called upon to howl—a sign of deep grief, and approximated, if not realized, in eastern lamentation—when they learn the desolation of Tyre from the inhabitants of Chittim, by which they would sail, and where they may be supposed to call on their way to the mother country. Tarshish, in this place, is generally supposed to be Tartessus in Spain, which is said to have been a Phœnician colony. Chittim is believed to be the island of Cyprus, which, as was very likely to be the case from its contiguity, is stated by Josephus to have been a Phœnician colony. Epiphanius also maintains that Cyprus was called Citium. The relative situations of these two places correspond with what is said in the conclusion of the verse, of the former re-

ceiving from the other intelligence of the downfall of the city.

2, 3. *Be still (or, silent), ye inhabitants of the isle ; thou whom the merchants of Zidon, that pass over the sea, have replenished. And by great waters the seed of Sihor, the harvest of the river, is her revenue ; and she is a mart of nations.*

The Tyrians themselves are next addressed. Silence, a significant feature of desolation, is enjoined upon them. The judgment of Tyre, "the isle," was aggravated by the consideration of her prosperity. She had been enriched even to overflowing by the commerce of Zidon—a large neighbouring city, of which Tyre was a colony : "The inhabitants of Zidon are thy mariners," Ezek. xxvii. 8. Her trade, it is said, extended to Egypt (3). She derived revenue from the waters of Sihor<sup>1</sup> (the Nile), and not only from Zidon and Egypt, but from all nations did she draw her resources.

4, 5. *Be thou ashamed, O Zidon ; for the sea hath spoken, even the strength of the sea, saying, I travail not, nor bring forth children, neither do I nourish up young men, nor bring up virgins. As at the report concerning Egypt, so shall they be sorely pained at the report of Tyre.*

Zidon, the parent city, is next urged to shame for Tyre, here called the sea, out of which she arose, by which she was begirt ; and the strength of the sea, because almost impregnable. Tyre, her offspring, complains that she is depopulated. The effect of the report of the destruction of Tyre, not upon one or two cities, but upon the nations generally which traded with her, is said to be to excite distress as great as what would be produced by the downfall of Egypt (5). The clause, "as at the report concerning Egypt," may be likewise translated thus, as by Lowth, "When the tidings shall reach Egypt."

<sup>1</sup> The name of the Nile is in Hebrew שִׁיחַ, *Shihor*, in Greek Μελας, in Latin *Melo*, in Ethiopic *Sihr*, all signifying black, in reference to the colour of the river, which is owing to the amount of rich soil which it holds in solution, not only when flooded, but always to such an extent as to require filtering.

6, 7. *Pass ye over to Tarshish; howl, ye inhabitants of the isle. Is this your joyous city, whose antiquity is of ancient days? her own feet shall carry her afar (or, from afar) off to sojourn.*

The distressed Tyrians are said to seek safety by fleeing to Tarshish, here representing, perhaps, her colonies generally. Although no record exists of their having fled to this particular city, yet Diodorus and others relate that on different occasions they sought safety in flight, and Carthage, a colony of Tyre, is specified as one of the places where they found refuge. Her desolate state is then represented as exciting astonishment (7); the joyous and ancient city so reduced! Its great antiquity is fully attested by Strabo, Curtius, Herodotus, Pliny, and others. It is noticed as an important city in the days of Joshua, Joshua xix. 29. The last step in the fall of a nation is then predicted of her. Of the luxurious and vain people it is said, that they would go afoot afar into banishment, denoting apparently voluntary exile, to which many of the inhabitants subjected themselves. Jerome relates that on the capture of the city by Nebuchadnezzar, he found it emptied not only of its population, but of all their property also, which they had conveyed away with them.

8, 9. *Who hath taken this counsel against Tyre, the crowning city, whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the honourable of the earth? The Lord of hosts hath purposed it, to stain (or, pollute) the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth.*

The preceding representation of the future condition of Tyre naturally suggests the question, who hath purposed such calamities against a city so renowned? and the answer is, that it is the Lord (9), and that he would thereby expose the imperfection and pitifulness of all human pride and glory. The indefiniteness of the expression, "the crowning city," opens a door for much variety of interpre-



tation, although differing little in the general import. It may be understood of the fame of Tyre; or more literally, of its distinction as a royal city, it and the chief Phœnician cities being all royal cities, each possessing an independent government of its own.

10-12. *Pass through thy land as a river, O daughter of Tarshish : there is no more strength (or, girdle). He stretched out his hand over the sea ; he shook the kingdoms : the Lord hath given a commandment against the merchant-city (or, concerning a merchant-man, or, Canaan), to destroy the strong holds (or, strengths) thereof. And he said, Thou shalt no more rejoice, O thou oppressed virgin, daughter of Zidon : arise, pass over to Chittim ; there also shalt thou have no rest.*

The rapidity of the flight of the inhabitants is then foretold. It would be like the rapidity of a river. The author of the destruction of Tyre is again noticed (11). The Lord is said to stretch out his hand (in judgment) over the sea, or sea-coast of Phœnicia which extended along the sea on which her great cities were built, and which formed the source and scene of her maritime greatness. The degradation of Tyre, and the flight of her inhabitants to Chittim (Cyprus), are repeated, with the addition that even there would her troubles pursue her (12). All the colonies of Tyre shared, in the course of ages, the fate of the mother city. Carthage, in particular, the most splendid of her colonies, the rival of Rome itself, to which many of those of Tyre fled after protracted war with the Romans, was utterly destroyed.—By “the daughter of Tarshish” some understand Tyre, as being in some degree supported by the commerce of that colony; and others consider it to mean Tarshish itself. So by the daughter of Zidon some understand Tyre, of which Zidon was the parent city; others understand by it Zidon itself, as the daughter of Zion means Jerusalem.—The expression, “merchant-city,” is in the Hebrew “Canaan.” In a preceding verse (5), the word, which in the original is Canaanites, is translated traffickers, the term denoting merchants

generally, as the inhabitants were distinguished by their mercantile enterprise; just as the word Chaldean was used to denote an astrologer. Here it is not necessary to give up the appellative signification, Phœnicia being part of Canaan; and the country, not the city, being intended in this place, the prediction including a number of strongholds.

13. *Behold the land of the Chaldeans: (this people was not, till the Assyrian founded it for them that dwell in the wilderness: they set up the towers thereof, they raised up the palaces thereof;) and he brought it to ruin.*

The instrument employed by the Lord in the chastisement of Tyre for her pride and sin is here foretold; and to aggravate her shame, it is said to be a power of very recent origin. That instrument is Chaldea or Babylonia, which, under Nebuchadnezzar, besieged Tyre. The origin of Chaldea is then narrated; and this is contained in what it has been proposed, for greater clearness, to regard as a parenthesis, the first and the last clauses of the verse being connected, and the rest read parenthetically. "This people was not," that is, did not exist, or was not known to exist until a recent period. Assyria, which at the time the prophet wrote, was the ruling power in the world, founded it, it is said, and fortified and adorned it for them who, before their establishment by Assyria, had been a rude and wandering people. This quite agrees with what is recorded in history. Belus, the Assyrian, is said to have reigned at Babylon upwards of 1300 years before Christ; and Herodotus narrates how much the queen Semiramis did for the improvement of the country. This appears the most natural and best supported view of the passage, although not the only one that has been taken. Alexander considers that the Chaldees were not the aboriginal inhabitants of Babylonia, but that they were brought thither from the mountains of Armenia, or Kur-

distan, by Assyrians, Xenophon speaking of the Chaldees as northern mountaineers.

14-16. *Howl, ye ships of Tarshish : for your strength is laid waste. And it shall come to pass in that day, that Tyre shall be forgotten seventy years, according to the days of one king : after the end of seventy years shall Tyre sing as (or, it shall be unto Tyre as the song of) an harlot. Take an harp, go about the city, thou harlot that hast been forgotten ; make sweet melody, sing many songs, that thou mayest be remembered.*

Verse 14 is a repetition of the first verse, thus expressing greatness of distress, according to a well-known Hebraism, repetition expressing intensity. The following verse (15) has occasioned much difference of opinion ; indeed, the remainder of the passage is very obscure. According to the most rational of the views which have been taken of it, the seventy years in which Tyre would be forgotten, refer to the period subsequent to her destruction by Babylon, it being taken for granted, although there is no historical proof to that effect, that at the close of the seventy years insular Tyre was erected ; during that interval, from the fall of the old, to the erection of the more modern city, Tyre being forgotten, not existing. The word "king" is usually understood in the sense of kingdom or dynasty. The Babylonian monarchy reached its greatest distinction under Nebuchadnezzar ; it continued during the reigns of Evil-Merodach and Belshazzar, with whom, when taken by Cyrus, it closed, thus continuing, for those seventy years, in one family or dynasty. The close of the 15th, and the 16th verse, which are connected together, have been understood of Tyre exerting herself successfully to recover her lost position as a great maritime city.

17, 18. *And it shall come to pass, after the end of seventy years, that the Lord will visit Tyre, and she shall turn to her hire, and shall commit fornication with all the kingdoms of the world upon the face of the earth. And her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the Lord : it shall not be treasured nor laid up ; for her merchandise shall*

*be for them that dwell before the Lord, to eat sufficiently, and for durable (or, old) clothing.*

The visiting of Tyre by the Lord, and her renewed commerce with the kingdoms of the world, which is foretold in these verses, has been applied to the condition of insular Tyre, which, in the time of Alexander the Great, by whom it was taken, had recovered her former prosperity; and the allusions made to the dedication of her riches to the Lord, have been applied to the proselytizing of Jews in her after their return from Babylon, and to the establishment and support of the Christian religion there, Acts xxi. 3-6, Eusebius (quoted by Barnes) relating, that "when the Church of God was founded in Tyre, much of its wealth was consecrated to God, and was brought as an offering to the Church." This, however, appears too meagre a fulfilment of the prophecy to be accepted as complete; and it closes leaving Tyre in a position of unsurpassed prosperity, and of universal holiness, in sad contrast with her present state of utter desolation. The close of the prophecy, from the 15th verse downwards, appears to refer to the close of her history—to her last and best condition; and on this supposition the Lord has not yet visited her—she is yet forgotten. As any past fulfilment of the prediction is so defective, it seems necessary to look for a yet future accomplishment. There is abundant warrant for this from what is elsewhere foretold as yet to be fulfilled in Tyre. The judgments of that land are not yet over, for it is written of a period yet to come: "What have ye to do with me, O Tyre and Zidon, and all the coasts of Palestine? will ye render me a recompence? and if ye recompense me, swiftly and speedily will I return your recompence upon your own head.... I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the children of Judah," Joel iii. 4-8. But although still forgotten and not visited, yet the end with her, as with the whole world, will be holiness to the Lord.



When Christ will have dominion from sea to sea, and "the kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents," "the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift," Ps. xlv. 12. When the glorious things spoken of Jerusalem shall be fulfilled—when the Lord shall write down the names of his people, mention will be made of converts to his service from Tyre, Ps. lxxxvii. 4. The metaphor of a harlot, here used to denote the intercourse of Tyre with other nations, does not in this instance imply guilt, but only the extent of her commerce. This appears from its being said, that her merchandise and her hire—of which it is previously said that she would turn to it—shall be holiness to the Lord, in apparent reference to the time when "every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts." The wealth of Tyre will yet be consecrated to the Lord.—The clause, "her merchandise shall be for them that dwell before the Lord," is an illustration of another prophecy, that Israel, who shall then be named "the priests and ministers of the Lord," shall "eat the riches of the Gentiles," lxi. 6.

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## CHAPTER XXIV.

THE prophet having foretold the fate of Babylon, Damascus, Moab and the other neighbouring enemies of the Jewish nation, and their final subjection to her by the God of recompences who shall surely requite the calamities inflicted upon his covenanted people, proceeds, in this and the three following chapters which form one vision, from these collateral subjects, to the main subject of his prophesying, viz., the things concerning Judah and Jerusalem. No two commentators apparently are agreed in their application of this vision, except in the one parti-

cular of seeking its fulfilment in the period of Jewish history already past. This difference of opinion furnishes of itself strong presumptive evidence that the prophecy has not yet received its accomplishment in all its particulars; and that much of it must be understood of events yet to come, appears indisputable, if the analogy of Scripture is to be attended to, and the rule of comparing spiritual things with spiritual to be followed. The chapter, after the 13th verse, takes up subjects still future. The previous part describes the judgments of Judea up to that period, or the degree of desolation which it would reach, and must therefore be understood of its condition generally.

1-3. *Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down (or, perverteth the face thereof), and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest (or, prince); as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him. The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the Lord hath spoken this word.*

The land<sup>1</sup> of Judea is represented, first, as being emptied of its inhabitants. So it is foretold that they would be cast out into a land that they knew not; that they would be plucked from off their own land; that they would be rooted out of their land in anger, and in wrath, and in great indignation. These predictions were fulfilled when Judea was invaded and taken by Titus. Those of the Jews who escaped the famine, the sword, and the captivity, were banished from Judea, and fled to the surrounding countries. The curse of emptiness has been inflicted

<sup>1</sup> The earth, or, the land, that is, the land of Judea. The word is properly translated in the third verse. In verse 4th, the expression, world, is in the Hebrew עֲוֵלָה, which is the poetical synonyme of אֶרֶץ, and denotes also the land of Judea.

to the very letter. An edict issued by Jovian prohibited a Jew from entering Jerusalem, or even from looking at it from a distance.—The expression, “he turneth it upside down,” in allusion to the manner of emptying a vessel of its contents, is very descriptive of the removal of the Jewish population, who, not exterminated, or exiles in any particular land, have, in fulfilment of the prophecy, been scattered over every country. An indiscriminate fate is pronounced against all (2); no class has been exempted from the common calamity; it has involved in it high and low, rich and poor, sacred and profane together. The reiteration in this verse implies universal ruin. This is also implied by the repetition in the third verse, with still greater emphasis, of the ideas in the first.

4-6. *The earth mourneth and fadeth away; the world languisheth and fadeth away; the haughty (or, the height of the) people of the earth do languish. The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left.*

A new aspect of the judgment of the land is now presented. The former describes the removal of its inhabitants; this describes its condition under its oppressors. Though emptied of the Jews, it was not to be uninhabited; it is said to be occupied by a haughty people: “The stranger that is within thee shall get up above thee very high,” Deut. xxviii. 43. This character is evidently applicable to the successive foes by whom Judea has been possessed, as the Romans, the Persians, the Arabs, the Tartars, the Turks. But the land, although it partially recovered, did not permanently retain its prosperity when its own guilty population was removed; on the contrary, according to the prophecy, it became anew subject to desolation. The reason of this is, that the land has been defiled under its oppressors: “I will give it to the wicked

of the earth for a spoil, and they shall pollute it; they shall pollute my secret place; for the robbers shall enter into it and pollute it. I will bring the worst of the heathen, and they shall possess their houses," Ezek. vii. 21-24. It has never passed into the hands of Protestant, but of heathen powers, who have substituted idolatry for the ordinances of Moses; who have broken, not the special covenant of God with Judah, but the general, the everlasting covenant. In the case of the Greek church, which extended over that region, there is no exception, as, although in the first instance pure, it afterwards became grossly corrupt. After the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, a temple of Venus—whose worship was the most impure of all the heathen deities, where all was impure together—was erected in Jerusalem. A Mahometan mosque occupies the site of the temple of Solomon. The holy places of the land, in so far as these remain, are the haunts of wild beasts, and the receptacles of their filth. The names of the nations who successively occupied the land are representations of whatever is ferocious or depraved. "The barbarism of Syria," according to Volney, "is complete."—Burckhardt, speaking of one district of Syria, gave it as his opinion, that if the English penal laws were promulgated in that country, there is scarcely any man in business, or who has money-dealings with others, who would not be liable to transportation before the end of the first six months. The expression, "the inhabitants of the land are burned" (6), is evidently figurative, like the previous one, "the curse hath devoured the land." They represent the severity of the judgments in the case of the land and the people, as what is devoured or burned is utterly destroyed. So heavy has been its curse, that "few men are left." The population was recently computed by Dr. Bowring not to exceed one-tenth of the number formerly supported in the land.

7-12. *The new wine mourneth, the vine languisheth, all the merry-*



*hearted do sigh. The mirth of tabrets ceaseth, the noise of them that rejoice endeth, the joy of the harp ceaseth. They shall not drink wine with a song; strong drink shall be bitter to them that drink it. The city of confusion is broken down: every house is shut up, that no man may come in. There is a crying for wine in the streets; all joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is gone. In the city is left desolation, and the gate is smitten with destruction.*

The prophecy proceeds to enumerate some particulars indicative of all but universal desolation, which it does in a strain of affecting sadness, in keeping with the melancholy picture which is drawn. The several judgments which follow are represented as already effected,<sup>1</sup> so sure was their accomplishment; and all these facts of prophecy are long since facts of history. The culture of the vine (7) is now neglected generally in Judea. It was forbidden by the Saracens, who often rooted them out. The use of wine is prohibited by the Mahometan creed; and Volney mentions the zeal of the police in enforcing this principle of the Koran. The wines that are to be obtained in the land are described by several travellers as being the worst in any country. The gratifications of music (8) as well as of wine have ceased. Among the Jews of old instrumental music was in constant use; but it is said by Volney, of the inhabitants of his day, that they had no music but vocal, and that most in the melancholy strain. Jerusalem has often and long realized the description of a city of confusion broken down (10); and the alarms of the few inhabitants in a land of robbers and plunderers, as the Arabs are, naturally led to the shutting of every house, that no man may come in. In short, sadness and desolation have long reigned (11, 12).

13. *When thus it shall be in the midst of the land among the people,*

<sup>1</sup> This change of tense is common in all the prophets. Generally, the proper prophetic tense, the future, is employed; very frequently the preterite, and sometimes the present. This is quite natural. While absolutely future, the events, to the prophet, were relatively past or passing. They appeared so in his vision, and sometimes he so describes them.

there shall be *as the shaking of an olive-tree, and as the gleaning-grapes when the vintage is done.*

But although to be reduced so low—although the general aspect of the country was to be what is here described, yet traces and memorials of past fertility were to be left, like the gleaning of the olive-tree after it is shaken, or of the vintage after it is gathered. And there do exist in the land occasional scenes of beauty and spots of luxuriant vegetation, which the curse, that has blighted all else, has spared. See xvii. 5, 6.

14-16 (first clause). *They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing for the majesty of the Lord, they shall cry aloud from the sea. Wherefore glorify ye the Lord in the fires (or, valleys), even the name of the Lord God of Israel in the isles of the sea. From the uttermost part (or, wing) of the earth have we heard songs, even glory to the righteous.*

The character of the prophecy is now altered. When the desolation indicated in the previous verses is reached, the scene changes. There succeeds a season of gladness for Judah. A commotion is represented as arising among them in all the places where they have been scattered. From the sea generally, on which most of the great cities of the world, where the Jews are removed, are built, even from the uttermost part of the earth (16), there is said to ascend the song of grateful adoration to God their Deliverer.—The word translated *fires*,<sup>1</sup> is from a root which signifies, among other meanings, the sun, and probably denotes here the East, in contrast with the isles of the sea—of the Mediterranean, or the West, expressing together the whole world.

16 (second clause). *But I said, My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me (or, Leanness to me, or, My secret to me)! the treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously; yea, the treacherous dealers have dealt very treacherously.*

The scene again changes, and these verses describe the calamities which shall befall Judah, now returned to their

<sup>1</sup> אֵשׁ, *fires*, occurs only here, from אֹר, *light, day-break, the sun.*

own land. This order of events is also in harmony with many other parts of Scripture. See vi. 13. Judah returning as a nation—merely as Jews—trusting to an arm of flesh to recover her long-lost position, shall be doomed to disappointment; again visited by the rod, and taught her weakness by the armies gathered together against her, become like the body which is reduced by famine, she will cry, “my leanness, wo unto me,” and will have cause to complain of some exceeding treachery or other on the part of her enemies—what it may be is not stated—whereby she is made to suffer. The abruptness of the language here harmonizes with the rapidity with which the prophet represents events as taking place.

*17-20. Fear, and the pit, and the snare, are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth. And it shall come to pass, that he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare: for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth do shake. The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again.*

These verses describe in language the most forcible the trouble which is yet to come upon all flesh, and which is referred to so often as the great and terrible day of the Lord. There will be no escape from calamity; to flee from one form of it will be to face another, for men will be surrounded with it as the wild beasts with snares (17, 18). In reference to the same occasion, it is written in Amos, “As if one did flee from a lion, and a bear met him, or went into the house and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him,” v. 19. In the phrase, “noise of the fear,” there is allusion to the shout made by hunters. Even the serenity of nature will be disturbed. Floods, and especially earthquakes, are introduced as contributing their share to the consternation that will prevail (18, last clause, 19, 20). “There shall be wonders in

the heavens, and in the earth." How far this language may be literal, in which the most terrible and destructive of natural phenomena are employed to denote the disasters of which Judea and the world will be the scene, and how far these may be symbolical of social and civil disturbances, or rather, how far both may be combined, can be known only by the events. The description of the same scenes in other passages is very similar: "Thou shalt be visited of the Lord of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire," xxix. 6; "There was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great," Rev. xvi. 18. The original of the 19th verse is still more emphatic than in our version—still more expressive of the confusion and ruin wrought by the earthquake. Alexander translates thus: "Broken, broken is the earth—shattered, shattered is the earth—shaken, shaken is the earth."<sup>1</sup> There is an obvious difficulty in regard to the clause, "it shall fall and not rise again." It cannot evidently refer strictly to the land, or to the people absolutely, for these judgments, and the purging of sin from the nation which they will be blessed to effect, will pave the way for prosperity both to the land and to the people. The reference is true of the land, viewed in its social and civil aspect. The state of things which would lead to these judgments—the resistance to the Almighty—the alliances with strangers, and so forth, would be for ever put down, for Judah, cleansed from all her filthiness, and having given unto her the new heart, "shall walk in the statutes of the Lord, and shall dwell in the land given to their fathers," Ezek. xxxvi. 25, &c. Of that time it is written similarly, "Behold I create a new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered,

<sup>1</sup> Cottage, קִלְיָה, from לָן, to pass the night, signifies, 1. a lodge; 2. a hanging-bed or hammock.—*Ges.*



nor come into mind," lxxv. 17 ; " They shall fall and not rise again."

21, 22. *And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall punish (or, visit upon) the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered (or, with the gathering of prisoners) in the pit (or, dungeon), and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited (or, found wanting).*

While the period indicated will be one of universal judgment, it will be so particularly to " the host of the high ones and the kings of the earth : " " Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth," Ezek. xxxix. 18 ; " The kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains," Rev. vi. 15. Judea, as the scene of their punishment and overthrow, may be called the prison (22), where they shall be gathered together. The concluding expression, " after many days shall they be visited,"<sup>1</sup> cannot be understood relatively to the gathering together of the kings of the earth, but indefinitely, or dating from the time when the Lord spake to the prophet. That the final destruction of the enemies of Israel will be as speedy as it will be terrible is often declared. There will be many days of long-suffering before the work is begun ; but when once begun, " a short work will the Lord make upon the earth." The expression in the text cannot therefore denote long delay in the execution of judgment upon the nations referred to after their assembling against Jerusalem ; it must be understood in the same sense in which the words occur in a similar passage, " after many days thou shalt be visited—in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword," Ezek. xxxviii. 8.

<sup>1</sup> The verb here, רָאָה, to look on, to visit, is used both in a good and bad sense, but generally in the latter, having then the signification of to punish.

23. *Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously (or, there shall be glory before his ancients).*

As in many other parts of Scripture the final judgments of the Lord against the nations of the earth, it is here foretold, will be followed by the sign of Christ in Zion. Wonders in heaven—the turning the sun into darkness, and the moon into blood—are also said repeatedly to be forerunners or accompaniments of the events of those days: “The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come,” Joel ii. 31; “The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining,” iii. 15; “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven,” Matt. xxiv. 29, 30. The conclusion of the verse teaches as distinctly as language can, that when he shall have punished the nations for their iniquity, Christ will reign on earth, and that the seat of that reign will be Zion, before his ancient people Israel.<sup>1</sup> The second of these circumstances, that he will reign in Jerusalem and before Israel, clearly implies that his reign will be something more than a merely spiritual reign prevailing equally throughout the earth, and visible only from its effects, and that it will not be without some visible manifestation or other, and that at Jerusalem. See xi. 10.

<sup>1</sup> Ancients, זִקְנִים, elders, the same word as is used in the common expression, the elders of Israel, representing here, it may be supposed, the whole nation.

## CHAPTER XXV.

THIS chapter describes various events which are to follow those predicted in the previous part of the prophecy. It begins with the song of praise which shall be taken up by Israel when, restored, delivered, and converted, the Messiah shall reign before them in Jerusalem. It is not very easy to determine how much of the passage is to be understood as put into the lips of Israel, and how much is spoken by the prophet; but it is immaterial, in so far as the meaning is concerned. Verses 1-5 and 9, at least, are clearly represented as the song of the nation. Like the kindred song in chap. xii., it relates chiefly to the deliverances wrought for them by the Lord, and to the blessings that are to flow from his dominion on earth.

1. *O Lord, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name: for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth.*

That day will then be come when the Lord will be to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah a God, and they will be to him a people: "O Lord, thou art my God." It will be the day in which the Lord alone will be exalted: "I will exalt thee." The wonderful things, which will form matter of Israel's praise, are the re-establishment of his ancient people in their own land, the overthrow of their enemies, and their conversion to himself. The faithfulness and truth of his counsels of old will then appear, when every promise made to Abraham and to Israel shall be made good; when, although the mountains

depart, and the hills be removed, it will be seen that his kindness has not departed from the house of Jacob.

2. *For thou hast made of a city an heap ; of a defenced city a ruin : a palace of strangers to be no city ; it shall never be built.*

Another subject of their praise will be the utter and perpetual destruction wrought by the divine judgments upon the strong places of their enemies, upon the city, the fortress, the palace. If considered generally—and the whole language is very general—the application of the verse is easy, viz., to the judgments inflicted on the enemies of Israel. If it is understood of a particular city, it cannot be said yet which is intended. The description corresponds with that of the mystic Babylon—Rome—against which a similar song will be taken up, Rev. xviii. xix.

3. *Therefore shall the strong people glorify thee, the city of the terrible nations shall fear thee.*

The effect of that display of the divine power which will be manifested when the nations of the world shall be judged, will be the homage to God of those who have witnessed or experienced it, that is, of the fragments of the nations which had been gathered together against Jerusalem. There is the same indefiniteness connected with the city referred to again, as in the previous verse. The same result is often said to follow from these national judgments : “ Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolation he hath wrought in the earth. Be still, and know that I am God : I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth,” Ps. xli. 8, 10 ; “ I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood : thus will I magnify myself ; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations,” Ezek. xxxviii. 22, 23.

4. *For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.*



How applicable, then, will be this song of Judah to her case. How long has she been the poor, the needy, the distressed, exposed to the storm, to the heat, to the blast of the terrible ones ; and how truly will Christ, her Deliverer and King, be her strength, her refuge, her shadow, her wall, when she shall be gathered, delivered from her enemies, restored, and the Lord have become her salvation.

*5. Thou shalt bring down the noise of strangers, as the heat in a dry place ; even the heat with the shadow of a cloud : the branch of the terrible ones shall be brought low.*

The song here passes from what the God of Judah will be to her to what he will be to all. Not only is it said of him that he had brought down her oppressors, but that he would subject the whole earth to himself. The conversion of the heathen world is foretold. As the cloud intercepts, and may be said to reduce the heat of the sun, so that its before scorching beams are harmless, so would the Lord reduce the shouting of the heathen, and bring it to nothing.<sup>1</sup>

*6. And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees ; of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.*

But the blessing would be positive as well as negative. Like a feast of the richest viands and the choicest wines, would the joys of the Messiah's reign be open to them, and be participated in by them. This describes the final and complete conversion of Gentile nations to God, when Christ shall not only be "the glory of his people Israel," but also "a light to lighten the Gentiles." The same order as here is observable throughout Scripture : "The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations ; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our

<sup>1</sup> The branch, from זֶמְרָה, 1. to prune ; 2. to sing ; hence the noun signifies a branch, a song. The second of these significations is evidently the more appropriate here.

God," lii. 10 ; "Is it a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel? I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth," xlix. 6 ; "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion : for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord. And many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people," Zech. ii. 10, 11. The allusion in the expression, "on the lees," is to the well-known fact, that the flavour and colour of wine are improved by keeping. In this case the dregs, or lees, falling to the bottom, it is literally wine on the lees. The same allusion is made with still greater minuteness in Jer. xlviii. 11.

7. *And he will destroy (or, swallow up) in this mountain the face of the covering cast (or, covered) over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations.*

"The face of the covering" is a Hebraism for covering. The covering or veil here introduced is manifestly the natural blindness of the mind of man to spiritual things. It will then be taken off all nations, an expression which is equivalent to the conversion of the whole earth to the Messiah. This is the truth of the previous verse presented in a different shape. But while the passage predicts that the veil of spiritual blindness will then be removed from the minds of all flesh, it implies and teaches that until then it will be spread over all nations : that is to say, when the Messiah shall come to establish his kingdom of righteousness on earth, he will find the world, as a whole, with the veil of spiritual darkness on its face. This view of the matter, which is, however, the plain Scripture of it, is contrary to the common opinion, that the gospel is gradually to win its way until its tidings are embraced by men of every clime and every hue—that its light is gradually to spread itself, under the present system of things,

until it shall dispel all heathen darkness, and the kingdom of righteousness and peace be ushered in gradually and noiselessly. What is the language of Scripture in other places on this question? It is said that, when the Lord shall arise upon Israel, and his glory shall be seen upon her, "darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people," lx. 2. It is asked, "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" which, according to Scripture usage, denotes that he shall not find faith on the earth. It is written, that when the last judgments which shall precede the introduction of the reign of righteousness shall be poured out on the nations of the earth, the heathen shall not know God, and the families shall not call on his name, Jer. x. 25. It appears to be to the character of the world at large, before the conversion of Israel and of the world, that the 14th and 53d Psalms refer. The remedy for the state of things described there is pointed out in the close of these psalms, "Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion," &c. And what is the state of matters described? What is the spiritual state of the world previous to that event? "The fool says in his heart that there is no God;" "There is none that doeth good." When God looks down from heaven, he finds that "every one is gone back—that they are altogether become filthy—that there is none that doeth good." In keeping with all this, how is it said that the Messiah will set up his kingdom? He will take unto him his great *power*, and reign. Now, he seeks to reign by his great grace; but that failing, the world, under the present dispensation, remaining unrenewed, he will change his plan; he will take unto him his great power, and reign; he will compel submission by judgment, when he has failed in winning it by mercy.

8. *He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God (or, Adonai Jehovah) will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the re-*

*buke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth : for the Lord hath spoken it.*

The destruction of sin foretold in the previous verse will be followed by that of death, "it shall be swallowed up in victory;" by that of sorrow, "God will wipe away tears from off all faces;" by that of reproach for his cause, "the rebuke," or literally, the reproach, shame, "of his people shall be taken away." This is evidently a picture of the state of things under the Messiah's reign. There are many similar descriptions throughout the Old and New Testaments, too familiar to require to be named, some of them, as that in the text, associated with Zion, or Jerusalem, as the centre or spring of the blessedness of the earth: "The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away," xxxv. 10. But in regard to the first particular, he shall swallow up death in victory,<sup>1</sup> what is the import of that expression? Its natural meaning obviously is, that at the time referred to, death will lose its power; or at least, that this will be the case to such an extent, over so large a proportion of men, that it may be said that death is swallowed up.<sup>2</sup> There have been other

<sup>1</sup> לְנִצָּח. St. Paul expresses this, by *eis νικην*, into victory. The translation of the Hebrew generally adopted is *εις τελος*, for ever. It may signify either, the two being naturally synonymous.

<sup>2</sup> This passage will be applied by many who hold the premillennial advent to what is called the first resurrection. They maintain that the resurrection of the just takes place at the beginning of the thousand years, and that, during that epoch, they live and reign with Christ; while the general resurrection, that to judgment, does not take place until the thousand years are finished. This opinion is founded upon the description of the resurrection given in Rev. xx., upon the circumstance that in many passages Scripture refers to the resurrection of the righteous alone, without any allusion whatever to that of the ungodly, as in Is. xxiv. 16; Luke xiv. 14; xx. 35, 36; 1 Thess. iv. 14-17; and to the phraseology of particular texts, such as 1 Cor. xv. 24; the structure of which appears to suggest, that as there has been an interval between the resurrection of Christ, the



victories over death, but these have been limited and partial. It was so in the case of those miraculously raised to life by our Lord and his prophets and apostles ; in the case of those who arose from their graves on the occasion

first-fruits, and that of those who are his, so there will be an interval between their resurrection and the coming of the end, when the last judgment is supposed to take place. On the other hand, the popular opinion, that the resurrection of the just and the unjust will be in the same hour, appears to be supported by other portions of Scripture when speaking of the resurrection, as Matt. xxv. 31-46 ; John v. 28, 29. The difficulty which such passages present has been met in this way:—The combination of the two events, the resurrections of the righteous and the wicked, may be accounted for, it is maintained, on the same principle that points which are remote on a landscape are of necessity crowded together in the perspective of a picture. So the prophets and apostles, predicting events which were not to occur for thousands of years after, may be supposed, at that distance from their day, to place incidents side by side which were not yet synchronous. The first prophecy of all has been brought forward in illustration of this, “It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” In the prophecy these two events are represented as occurring together ; and, at such a distance from their fulfilment, it is not unnatural that they should be so. Besides, no object was to be gained by marking the interval that would elapse between the periods of their accomplishment. Still, in reality, they are not synchronous. The one is already past : on the cross Christ was “bruised in the only vulnerable point, the heel of his humanity.” But eighteen hundred years after the accomplishment of the one half of the prophecy, the other half, the bruising of Satan’s head, is still unaccomplished. The contiguity of the predictions respecting the resurrection of the just and of the unjust, it is hence argued, proves nothing. But this argument will not hold good in every case, as in 2 Tim. iv. 1, “I charge thee, therefore, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom.” Here the living and the dead are said to be judged at the same time, at the appearing and the kingdom of Christ ; and in order to this, all the dead must necessarily be raised then. The time referred to in this passage appears to be the same as that at which Isaiah introduces his prophecy of the victory over death. It is the time of his appearing, for it is the time when he “shall reign in mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before his ancient people gloriously ;” and it is the time of his kingdom, for it is then that the veil of spiritual blindness, which will still remain spread over the face of all nations, will be destroyed. The circumstance that, in repeated instances, the resurrection of the just alone is mentioned—and the remark applies to 1 Cor. xv. 24, as well as to the other cases where this occurs, as previously noticed—furnishes no valid objection to the doctrine of the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked

of his resurrection, and in the case of Christ himself. But that at his appearing and his kingdom will be on a scale so large, that it is called the swallowing up of death, as in a parallel passage it is said to be the casting of

being simultaneous, as in these cases it is only the resurrection of the former which is required in the argument of the writer, and that therefore is all that is introduced; and the omission of all reference to the resurrection of the latter proves nothing either one way or another. There remains, however, the objection presented in Rev. xx., and this furnishes in reality the only apparent argument for the doctrine of a separate resurrection of the just and the unjust. Hence the question arises, are the other Scriptural texts, which, in their obvious and natural signification, teach the resurrection together of all the dead at the time of Christ's appearing, to be accommodated to this single passage? or is it, if it will allow of such an exposition, to be explained in conformity with them? Is the one passage to be made the rule for explaining the many? or are the many to be made the rule for explaining the one? Obviously the latter is the case, if it can be done without infringing on the integrity of the written word. There can be no contradiction between them; the two must be reconcilable. The chief difficulty lies in the expression, "the rest of the dead." If it be understood of the wicked dead—of those who do not live and reign with Christ at his appearing and his kingdom—then clearly the first resurrection embraces only the righteous, and this passage appears irreconcilable with other Scripture. May not the word "dead" be used here, however, not in its literal, but in a figurative signification? it being the apparent doctrine of revelation in other Scripture not symbolical, that the resurrection is general and once for all. "*All* that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth." So in the conclusion of Rev. xx.; but in a separate vision, as intimated by the words "I saw," the sea, death, the grave, are said to give up their dead, implying all their dead, and *every man* is judged according to their works. Taking the word, then, in a figurative sense, there is nothing to which the clause appears to be applicable, according to the light of other Scripture, except the powers represented by Gog and Magog. These appear on the field, Ezek. xxxviii., and are overcome in the day of national judgment—the judgment of the quick, or the then living on the earth; but they are not said to have their sentence executed then, as in the case of the other confederates in the unholy alliance against the Lord and his anointed. These, the beast and the false prophet, along with death and hell, are said to be cast into the lake of fire. This is not at that time the fate of Satan, nor of Gog and Magog. On the contrary, at the end of the 1000 (prophetic) years, when Satan is loosed, the powers represented by Gog and Magog again appear on the scene as Satan's confederates, Rev. xx. 8: "They live not again until the thousand years are finished;" but at the close of that era they reappear. Then, however, their doom is sealed. While the devil

death into the lake of fire. The application of Isaiah's prophecy by St. Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 54, shows that it refers to the period of the general resurrection. When the Lord shall build up Zion—the period referred to in the text—he shall appear in his glory: not as he appeared on earth, but in his glorious body, as he appeared on the mount of transfiguration, when “his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.” Then his saints “shall see him as he is,” “they shall be like him,” “they shall walk with him in white,” as he was on the mount, they shall be clothed with their incorruptible, their immortal, their glorious bodies. It is in connexion with this change on the bodies of believers, the change that they will experience when Christ shall appear in his glory, that Paul employs the expression of Isaiah, “when this corruptible (body) shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal (body) shall have put on immortality, *then* shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, death shall be swallowed up in victory.” This application of the passage by the apostle appears conclusively to identify the resurrection of the just with the commencement of the reign of righteousness on earth.

*9. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad, and rejoice in his salvation.*

Here the language of thanksgiving to be taken up by Judah at last, is again introduced. How suitable in their circumstances will be the language, “we have waited for him,”—how long the interval since last they were glad in

is cast into the lake of fire (10), Gog and Magog are devoured by fire out of heaven (4). According to the preceding view, then, the victory over death which is foretold by Isaiah, is that which will be realized, when, in that language of the apostle which describes so happily the combination of Almighty power with infinite simplicity in its exercise, “they that have done good, and they that have done evil, shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth.”

the Lord. The same subject is often introduced in the songs to be sung in Zion by restored and converted Judah : “ Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee—the desire of our soul is to thy name and to the remembrance of thee,” xxvi. 8.

10-12. *For in this mountain shall the hand of the Lord rest, and Moab shall be trodden down (or, thrashed under him), even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill (or, thrashed in Madmenah). And he shall spread forth his hands in the midst of them, as he that swimmeth spreadeth forth his hands to swim : and he shall bring down their pride together with the spoils of their hands. And the fortress of the high fort of thy walls shall he bring down, lay low, and bring to the ground, even to the dust.*

The prophecy now adverts to the ground of Judah’s thanksgiving, expressed by the word *for*, viz., the protection vouchsafed to the nation on mount Zion, and the destruction of their enemies. The hand of the Lord resting on mount Zion, seems to denote that there his protection and blessing will be permanently experienced, as in the expression, “ according to the good hand of the Lord upon me,” Zech. ii. 8, 18, and elsewhere. Its meaning is explained in such passages as these : “ In mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance,” Joel ii. 32 ; “ The Lord shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth even for ever,” Micah iv. 7 ; “ The Lord shall comfort Zion, he will make her wilderness like Eden,” li. 3 ; see ch. ii. 2. But while it shall be so with his ancient people, destruction shall be the portion of their enemies, of Moab and of them all, in that day. What is uttered here against them, is of similar import to the prediction in the second verse. Here probably, as in regard to the city there referred to, Moab represents the combined enemies of Judah, just as in Zech. xiv. 18, what is denounced against Egypt must be regarded as applicable to every other nation. Of these enemies Moab is described as one : “ They shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab,” see xi. 14. It is to be observed that the judgments here pronounced against Moab



receive their accomplishment in connexion with the reigning of the Lord on mount Zion. So in Zeph. ii. 8-11, when the Jews shall lie down in the houses of Ashkelon when the Lord has visited them and turned away their captivity, it is said, "I have heard the reproach of Moab (by whomsoever then occupied), wherewith they have reproached my people, therefore as I live saith the Lord of hosts, surely Moab shall be as Sodom, the residue of my people shall spoil them, and the remnant of my people shall possess them. This shall they have for their pride." But not Moab only, but other nations shall be involved in these judgments; it is but the representative of many countries; for in that same chapter are enumerated the Philistines, Ammon, Ethiopia, and others. The circumstances of their punishment on this occasion, are different from the description of their past judgments. In regard to these, the nations specified are mentioned, and their judgments marked in detail and at length, but in Zeph. they are all combined together as being involved in one common sentence inflicted at one time. The expression "trodden down," is in the margin "thrashed," these in eastern phraseology being equivalent, thrashing being often done by the treading of oxen, a significant symbol of judgment. As the previous clause, "the hand of the Lord shall rest," indicates protection, so the following one, "he shall spread forth his hands" (11), appears, from the connexion, to indicate wide destruction. As, however, Judah will be the instrument of this, as it is with her that "he will thrash the nations," Micah iv, 13, and as the boundaries of her kingdom will then be extended, there may be allusion to this circumstance in the peculiar expression, spreading forth the hands, as he that swim-meth spreadeth them forth to swim. The restriction imposed upon the Jews in former ages will then be done away: "Meddle not with the children of Esau which dwell in Sion; for I will not give you of their land, no, not

so much as a footbreadth," Deut. ii. 2. The concluding allusion to the overthrow of a particular fortress or fortresses, favours the supposition that Moab is here the representative of the other nations which shall be sharers of her fate, as no fortress, except Karak Moab, now exists in Moab. If the prophecy be limited to her, it involves the supposition of the re-erection of fortresses in the land antecedent to its final judgments.

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## CHAPTER XXVI.

THIS chapter, like what precedes, refers to the period when the Jewish nation, re-established in their own land, shall be converted to the faith of Christ ; and consists of a song of praise to be then sung by them. It refers to the same period as the songs of the 12th and 25th chapters, of which it may be said to be an enlargement. It is the most lengthened of those that occur in Isaiah ; and there are introduced into it such subjects as might be expected in the circumstances of a nation recovered from their dispersion, delivered from their enemies, restored to the privileges of the most favoured people, and brought to the knowledge and service of the Messiah. Its resemblance to the others, and to many of the psalms also, is manifest, showing, that although some of these last were so far applicable as to be adapted to the circumstances of the Jews at the time they were penned by David, and sung in the temple, they were primarily prophetical of events to come in Judah's history.

1. *In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah ; We have a strong city : salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.*

The language of this song, as well as its connexion and coincidence with other prophecies, shows that its fulfil-

ment is still future. For when, either at their return from Babylon, or at any past period, can it be said that salvation has been the walls and bulwarks of Jerusalem ? Then their first object was to rebuild their walls and fortresses. In the past history of the nation generally, their trust has been in the natural and artificial defences of their city ; but the language of the song intimates, that when it shall be sung, their trust shall be removed from every arm of flesh. It coincides with what is foretold of them, when " they shall take with them words, and shall turn to the Lord ; and shall say, Asshur (Assyria) shall not save us ; neither shall we say any more to the works of our hands, Ye are our gods," Hos. xiv. 2, 3. In a previous song, the same feeling is expressed thus : " Behold, God is my salvation." In yet more exact correspondence with the language of the song, it is foretold, " thou shalt call thy walls salvation, and thy gates praise," lx. 18. But while salvation will be their best bulwarks, the first clause of the verse will also hold good. When God shall build up Jerusalem, not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed. There is an antithesis between this clause and the last verse of the previous chapter, out of which it arises. When the fortresses of her enemies shall be laid in the dust, Judah will have a strong city.

2. *Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth (or, truths) may enter in.*

The singers of the now righteous nation approaching Jerusalem claim admission within. In a parallel song it is said similarly, " Open to me the gates of righteousness," Ps. cxviii. 19 ; and in another, " Who shall ascend unto the hill of God," &c., Ps. xxiv. 3. In another description we read, " An highway shall be there, the way of holiness ; the unclean shall not pass over it ; the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs," xxxv. 8, 11. This verse is very frequently put by the Jews over the entrance of their burying-grounds ; a singu-

larly unfortunate selection on the part of a nation which still goes about to establish its own righteousness, and will not submit itself to the righteousness of God.

3, 4. *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace* (or, *peace, peace*), whose mind (or, *thought, or, imagination*) is *stayed on thee*; *because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord* (or, *Jah*) *Jehovah is everlasting strength* (or, *the Rock of ages*).

The song now refers to the long unknown peace found by the Jewish nation at last, and the long withheld confidence they place in the King of Israel, descriptive of their rejoicing, when “everlasting joy shall be upon their heads, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” The same experience of peace, and the same expression of confidence in Jehovah are introduced in the parallel songs: “Thou comfortest me;” “I will trust and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song.”

5, 6. *For he bringeth down them that dwell on high; the lofty city, he layeth it low: he layeth it low, even to the ground: he bringeth it even to the dust. The foot shall tread it down, even the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy.*

Another source of praise to the nation is the overthrow of their enemies. This subject is introduced in all the songs that are put into the lips of restored Judah. In this case, the language is very similar to that which occurs in the beginning of the previous chapter. It possesses the same indefiniteness, leaving it undetermined whether an individual city is intended, or the cities of their enemies generally. The latter opinion seems warranted from the general nature of the description, “them that dwell on high;” and from the fact being corroborated by other Scripture, that the Jews—the poor and needy (6)—when restored, “shall spoil those that spoiled them”—not one individual oppressor only, but them all: “Ye shall tread down the wicked, and they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet,” *Mal. iv. 3*; “The first-born



of the poor shall feed, and the needy shall lie down in safety, xiv. 30.

7-11. *The way of the just is uprightness: thou, most upright, dost weigh the path of the just. Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord. Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see: but they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at the people (or, toward thy people); yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them.*

It is because Judah shall, by this time, have turned to the Lord, that she will be thus blessed. It is not until she be upright<sup>1</sup> or righteous, that God will make plain<sup>2</sup> her path. This is according to the terms of the covenant made by God with Israel: "If they will not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, then the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful; but if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, the Lord shall cause thine enemies to be smitten before thy face," Deut. xxviii. Israel has long forgotten this; but she will be taught at last, not in the way of long-suffering on God's part, but in the way of judgment (8), to return to God, to wait and long for him (9). That her conversion to God is to be wrought by judgment is often told. See i. 25. "I will allure her into the wilderness, and there will I speak comfortably to her; and I will give her her vineyards from thence," Hos. ii. 14; "I will go and return to my place till they acknowledge their offence. In their affliction they shall seek me early," Hos. v. 5. The experience of Israel will be the experi-

<sup>1</sup> "The just," לְצַדִּיק, literally, to the righteous.

<sup>2</sup> "Thou dost weigh," from פָּלַם, to make straight, even, applied to a path as well as to a balance.

ence of all flesh. When the judgments that are yet to come on the world shall be poured out, its inhabitants shall learn righteousness. Kindness may fail (10)—it has failed hitherto—in converting the world to Christ; let favour be shown to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness. Even the manifestation of the Divine character—the display of judgment—made in the shame and suffering of the Jews, has failed in opening the eyes of the nations of the earth (11). The hand of the Lord has been long lifted up against that people, yet the Gentiles have not learned wisdom. But it will not be so always; they shall be made to see, by manifestations of God, to which they will be able no longer to shut their eyes—manifestations, on the one hand, of his zeal<sup>1</sup> for his ancient people, which will cover his enemies with shame; and manifestations of his vengeance, on the other, which like fire will devour them.<sup>2</sup> The last part of the verse may be thus more intelligibly rendered: “Let them see, and let them be ashamed. The jealousy of the people (*or*, for the people), even fire, shall consume thine enemies.”

12, 13. *Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in (or, for) us. O Lord our God, other lords besides thee have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention of thy name.*

The song now expresses the assurance of Judah, that He who had wrought their deliverances for them, and such deliverances, would bless them with continued peace: “Great shall be the peace of thy children,” liv. 13; “I will extend peace to her like a river,” lxvi. 12; “They shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace,” Ps. xxxvii. 11. With this spirit of confidence there is mingled

<sup>1</sup> “Envy,” *קנאה*, properly signifies “zeal,” as in ix. 6; Ps. lxix. 9, although it has also the secondary sense of “envy.” The former is to be preferred here.

<sup>2</sup> “Of thine enemies,” is used in the objective sense of “for thine enemies.”

the lamentation of bygone subjection to other lords (13), and the resolution is expressed of henceforth glorifying the Lord alone.<sup>1</sup>—The other lords, taking the expression in connexion with the following verse, appear to be the enemies and oppressors of the nation, from whom Israel will at last obtain deliverance.

14. *They are dead, they shall not live ; they are deceased, they shall not rise : therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish.*

The subject of their enemies' overthrow is introduced in these verses—a very natural one, in the circumstances in which this song will be sung, to return to, and dwell on, and make the subject of grateful and repeated acknowledgment. The utter annihilation of their enemies is often foretold : “The extortioner is at an end, the spoiler ceaseth, the oppressors are consumed out of the land,” xvi. 4.

15. *Thou hast increased the nation, O Lord, thou hast increased the nation : thou art glorified ; thou hadst removed it far unto all ends of the earth.*

Their own numerical increase, and the extension of the boundaries of their kingdom, furnish other subjects for thanksgiving. Of the additions which shall be made to their numbers, when the remnant of them, which shall remain scattered over the earth after their first or national return, shall be gathered from all lands, it is said to Judah, “Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold ; all these gather themselves together, and come to thee. Thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction, shall even be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants,” xlix. 18, 19 ; “A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation,” lx. 22 ; “I will settle you after your old estates, and will do better unto you than at your beginnings. I will increase them

<sup>1</sup> “Will we make mention,” זָכַר, in Hiph. signifying, “to cause to be remembered,” “to praise.” The clause is rendered by Lowth, “Thee only, and thy name (henceforth) will we celebrate.”

with men like a flock," Ezek. xxxvi. 11, 37. An increase, not only of population, but also of territory, is foretold in the last clause of this verse. The additions made in the English version to the Hebrew text are particularly unhappy. Without these it reads, "Thou hast removed far all the ends of the earth or land;" that is, thou hast extended far the ends or borders of the land (of Judah). This extension of boundary is frequently promised, see xix. 24. Then the whole land originally covenanted to Judah shall be possessed. Egypt also, on the one hand, and Assyria on the other, shall be annexed, it is predicted, as subservient to Israel.

16-18. *Lord, in trouble have they visited thee; they poured out a prayer (or, secret speech) when thy chastening was upon them. Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been in thy sight, O Lord. We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen.*

The means by which the nation is brought to turn to God is again noticed in the song, viz., by judgment, see i. 25. The word translated "prayer," signifies properly, a whispering, sighing. This is a characteristic of true repentance, and is said elsewhere to be descriptive of that of Israel, when they shall turn to the Lord: "That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame," Ezek. xvi. 63. The emotions of sincere repentance are not, like the shallow stream, noisy, but superficial and scanty; but, like the mighty river, deep and full, but still. Their chastening—the instrument of recalling the Jews to their allegiance, is enlarged upon and illustrated by a familiar and significant comparison (17, 18). The period of gestation is long, but that of delivery is comparatively short. So has it been, so will it be with Israel. The spiritual birth of that nation, however contrary it may appear to human



calculation, however improbable to human reason, is yet in accordance with the fixed laws of nature. The same figure is employed in other places: "Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? Wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness?" Jer. xxx. 6. This comparison is followed (verse 18, last clause) by what seems to be a recognition of the Divine hand in the wonderful things that will then have been wrought for them by God. It is foretold of them, that when their final trials shall have come, and all nations shall be gathered in the siege against Jerusalem, they will, in the first instance, seek safety in an arm of flesh: "Wo to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of me; that walk to go down into Egypt, to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh," xxx. 1, 2. But the exertions, however great, made to free themselves from their oppressors, shall be vain, iii. 5. God, and not themselves, it will be, who will deliver them, and cause their enemies to fall.

19. *Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.*

This obscure passage appears to correspond in time and subject with the first clause of the 8th verse of the previous chapter (which see). Although only the resurrection of the just to happiness is mentioned in the first clause, because that alone is introduced in a song of praise—that of the unrighteous to judgment would be out of place—yet the allusion is made to it in exactly the same circumstances as other allusions to the resurrection, both of the righteous and the wicked. Thus the passage in Daniel xii. 2, "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt," is introduced, just as in the text, after a time of trouble, such as never

has been since there was a nation, and after the deliverance of the ancient people of God. The only difference is, that in the one case the description is partial, so much being introduced only as was required—unless, indeed, the last clause, “the earth shall cast out the dead,” be understood of the dead generally, a signification which it would bear but for the context, which seems to limit it to the righteous dead, to those who arise and sing—in the other it is complete. Here Judah, addressing God in her song, says, Not all men, not thine enemies, but thy dead—including all—shall arise,—as in the parallel passages, they that shall be priests of God and of Christ—they that are his people; and my (Judah’s) dead bodies—the dead bodies, that is, of many of God’s ancient people—of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Sarah, and Moses, and others, who died in faith, not having received the promises, but who then reigning with Christ shall receive them, and shall possess the city prepared for them, Heb. xi. They shall awake, not to shame, but they shall awake and sing. At the voice, and by the power of God, shall they revive, as the dew revives the herb. The song now closes, leaving the Jews restored and blessed, and the witnesses for Christ, who have suffered for him, raised and reigning with him.—The words “together with,” are not in the original, and are neither warranted nor called for. “My dead body,” may be rendered “my dead” generally, that is, my dead bodies, as in Ps. lxxix. 2.

20, 21. *Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood (or, bloods), and shall no more cover her slain.*

A frequent subject of prediction is returned to in these verses, and in the following chapter, viz., the great tribulation which shall be in the last days. This is prefaced with an invitation to the people of God to hide them-

selves until it shall be past. The duration of this season of tribulation is said to be short, for a little moment. So it is called "the *day* of the Lord's vengeance," xxxiv. 8; "Those days shall be shortened," Matt. xxiv. 22; "He will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth," Rom. ix. 28. The expression "my people,"—God being here the speaker,—is not necessarily limited to the Jews; it may mean, and it seems to be here so understood, his people generally, just as the previous expression, "thy dead," includes his children, whether Jew or Gentile. It cannot be shown from here why his people are so to hide themselves, whether in order to escape the indignation poured by God upon his enemies, or their indignation directed against his people. Other passages appear to favour the latter opinion. Thus, in reference to the same period, it is written, "Let mine outcasts dwell with thee Moab; be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler," xvi. 4. In connexion with the same period, we read, "Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, seek righteousness, seek judgment; it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger," Zeph. ii. 3. But there is a still more striking parallel between the text in Isaiah and the account of the death of the witnesses, or the suppression of their witnessing, in Rev. xi. The period appears the same. It is followed first by a great earthquake and great destruction, and next by the kingdoms of this world becoming the kingdoms of our Lord (13, 15); and the particulars of the description harmonize. The witnesses are slain, that is—for in Revelation these prophecies are symbolical, not as in Isaiah literal—their voice as witnesses for Christ is silenced by their enemies for a period denoted by three and a half days, and then they revive, they awake, and sing. And what is this, tied down as the true descriptions seem to be to the same period, but the people of God entering into their chambers for a little

moment until the indignation be overpast. But the oppression of the wicked is permitted only for a little moment: "The oppressors are consumed out of the land," xvi. 4. So in Ps. cxxv. 3. In apparent reference to the same period, it is written, "The rod of the wicked shall not lie upon the lot of the righteous." So terrible will their judgments be, in such abundance will blood flow, that the earth will not, as it were, imbibe it; it will be up to the horses' bridles: "the earth will disclose her blood." So vast will be the multitude of corpses, that they will remain unburied; they will be dung upon the face of the earth: "it shall no more cover her slain."

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## CHAPTER XXVII.

THE disjunction of this chapter from the two concluding verses of the previous one is evidently improper. It is the same subject which is continued in the beginning of the chapter, viz., the final judgments of the Lord upon his enemies. As it proceeds, besides announcing the ultimate happiness of Israel, it declares the more merciful dealing of God with them than with their enemies: here, even in the matter of correction for sin, it will appear at last that they are a favoured nation: and is occupied chiefly with a description of their severe, but yet comparatively mitigated judgments.

1. *In that day the Lord, with his sore, and great, and strong sword, shall punish leviathan the piercing (or, crossing like a bar) serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.*

The enemies of God and of his people are represented



figuratively by a monster, or monsters—leviathan,<sup>1</sup> the dragon—which he shall punish or slay. What the symbolical animal or animals here named are is not specified. It is impossible to determine whether these creatures, which are objects of abhorrence and fear, and therefore fitting symbols of enemies, represent the enemies of Israel generally,—the “all nations” which shall come against Jerusalem, the “all flesh” with whom the Lord shall plead,—or a particular hostile power or powers. The natural impression made by the passage is, that it indicates the overthrow of one or more individual oppressors, which is, or one of which is, a great maritime power. It is worthy of notice, that in a psalm, also referring to the future history of Israel, mention is made of breaking the heads of the dragons in the waters, and of leviathan, Ps. lxxiv. 13, 14. The use of the sword is often taken as an emblem of divine vengeance. Here the terribleness of the punishment threatened is expressed by the qualifying adjectives, sore (hard), great, and strong: “By his sword will the Lord plead with all flesh,” lxvi. 16; “If I whet my glittering sword, I will render vengeance to mine enemies,” Deut. xxxii. 41.

2, 3. *In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine. I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.*

The day of the destruction of the enemies of Israel will be that of her prosperity: she will then be a vineyard<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Piercing, from פָּרַח, 1. to flee; 2. to pass through, to stretch across (margin), therefore, when applied to a serpent, flying, or swift.

<sup>2</sup> The construction here is very abrupt, and has given rise to various interpretations. The literal translation is, In that day a vineyard of wine. Sing to her. הִתְחַנֵּן, which is rendered red wine, signifies properly wine, although the root bears also the signification to be red. Alexander renders אֶנִּי לָהּ, afflict her, instead of sing to her, on the ground of its being the better established signification of אָנַח, and otherwise more satisfactory. It is then, he adds, a defiance or permission to the enemies of the Church (of the Jews) to effect this.

of the Lord, and will be the praise and song of all the earth. Here men generally are urged to speak of her happy condition, to congratulate her upon her restored privileges. The same thing is done when it is said, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people: speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned," xl. 1; "Be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy," lxv. 18. The watchful and tender care of the nation, never to be withdrawn after her iniquity is purged away, is then described (3). Of the same people, at the same time, it is written, "The Lord shall guide thee continually: thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not," lviii. 11; "I will seek out my sheep, and will feed them by the mountains of Israel by the rivers: I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be," Ezek. xxxiv. 11.

4, 5. *Fury is not in me: who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through (or, march against) them, I would burn them together. Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me.*

The previous declaration of the future security of Israel is followed by another of the ruin of all who shall then oppose the Lord. Though not the God of vengeance, but of mercy, on that day acting as if in an assumed character, as if his own character were laid aside—on that day when the very Lamb will be angry, he will be to his enemies, and to the enemies of his people, what fire is to the briers and thorns. Though fury is not in him—though no attribute of his character—though very pitiful and of tender mercy—though a God of pardons (Neh. ix. 17, marg.)—made up of them, as it were, as the sinner is made up of sins—who has a pardon ready for each repented-of transgression, yet on that day, "according to their deeds, ac-

according he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompence to his enemies," lix. 18; "I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury, and their blood will be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain my raiment," lx. 3. How striking a representation is it of the terribleness of the great day of the Lord, when he is made to appear divested of his own habitual character, and adopting another—one of fury—for the occasion. But even to those enemies, and to every one, there is an alternative presented (5). An assurance, which could not be made more positive, is given, that they may make peace with him. They may imitate Israel, whose song shall then be—The Lord Jehovah is my strength.

6. *He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root : Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.*

The prosperity of Israel, brightened by contrast with the fate of their enemies, is again resumed. The figure that is elsewhere applied to the land (vi. 13), is here applied to the people. Israel has long been like the tree in winter—stripped and peeled, but she has died to revive again. Her spring will come at the period here indicated. Or, what rather seems intended here, she has become like the tree which has been uprooted and is laid prostrate. The Jews were rooted out of Judea by Titus, and though since then they have spread themselves over every country, in none have they taken root; but when restored to their own land, they "shall take root, and blossom, and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit." A similar figure is employed at great length by Hosea: "I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon; his branches shall spread," xiv. 5. That will be the old age of the nation, but "they shall still bring forth fruit in old age, they shall be fat and flourishing," Ps. xcii. 14. Then all nations shall be blessed in them. The salvation of Jerusalem "shall go forth as

a lamp that burneth," and "the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness," lx. 1, 2.

7, 8. *Hath he smitten him, as he smote (or, according to the stroke of) those that smote him? or is he slain according to the slaughter of them that are slain by him? In measure, when it shooteth (or, thou sendest it) forth, thou wilt debate with it: he stayeth his rough wind (or, when he removeth it) in the day of the east wind.*

Heavy as the judgments of Israel have been, yet it will then be seen that, though not less deserved, their punishment has been less than that of their oppressors; that they have not been smitten to the extent that their enemies shall have been: "Though I make a full end of all the nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee; but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished," Jer. xxx. 11. It is immaterial whether God or the Jews be here regarded as the slayer; they will be his instrument. The following verse (8) is sufficiently obscure. The marginal readings are generally preferred by critics. Adopting these, the literal translation is as follows: "In measure in sending her away, thou dost contend with her. He removes her with a rough wind in the day of the east wind."<sup>1</sup> This appears to be the idea presented positively, which in the previous verse is presented negatively. Instead of making a full end of the Jewish nation, God is described as pleading with them by their removal from their land, sweeping them from it as by a storm—a judgment disastrous enough, but not fatal. The east wind in Syria is said to be the most trying to which the country is exposed, from its proceeding from the scorching deserts of Arabia. It thus indicates severity of judgment. The staying one wind when another is raging, denotes the averting of some new catastrophe—the saying of the chastening already inflicted, it is enough. If the latter

<sup>1</sup> "It shooteth forth," from a root signifying to send. "He slayeth,"—the verb here signifies to meditate, speak, also to separate, remove.



clause particularly should seem to require a more minute accomplishment than this—if it is not to be regarded as explanatory of the former clause, but as indicating a distinct act of judgment, its fulfilment must be sought and waited for in the event—the day will declare it. It may in this case be regarded as predicting, that on an occasion when some great evil seems impending, it will be suddenly warded off.

9-11. *By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged ; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin ; when he maketh all the stones of the altar as chalk-stones that are beaten in sunder, the groves and images (or, sun-images) shall not stand up. Yet the defenced city shall be desolate, and the habitation forsaken, and left like a wilderness : there shall the calf feed, and there shall he lie down, and consume the branches thereof. When the boughs thereof are withered, they shall be broken off : the women come, and set them on fire ; for it is a people of no understanding : therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour.*

The effect of the divine judgments is now foretold. They will not prove annihilating, but correcting ; they are meant not to kill, but to cure. Their fruit or result is said to be the removal of Israel's iniquity, the utter destruction of her altars, groves, and images : "Thy graven images will I cut off, and thy standing images out of the midst of thee, and thou shalt no more worship the work of thy hands : and I will pluck up thy groves out of the midst of thee," Mic. v. 13, 14 ; "Ephraim (Israel) shall then say, What have I to do any more with idols ?" Hos. xiv. 8. These predictions have been already fulfilled, in so far as they point to literal idolatry : the objects and scenes of their idol-worship have been broken and removed from their land : their judgments have long since produced this fruit ; and their final cleansing from every idol of the heart is often attributed to the same cause. See i. 25. The correction in measure to which they would be subjected, is further described as involving the whole land in ruin, so that the cities would be reduced to desolation (10)

—the land to depopulation, so that the calf would graze over it undisturbed,—and the women to a life of degrading toil (11). The allusion to the women carrying away the branches, as is witnessed at the present day, furnishes striking testimony to the desolation of the land, and the stagnation of all enterprise among inhabitants of no understanding. It is customary in some parts to excavate the earth from the larger roots of the most magnificent trees in the few spots where these still exist, and to apply fire, by which means the roots are destroyed, and the tree is brought to the ground. It is also common to apply fire around the lower part of the trunk. The branches are thus accessible; and when they are withered, they are cut off and removed for fuel; while the noble trunk, where there is not enterprise or skill to turn it to good account, is left to rot.

12, 13. *And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall beat off from the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem.*

The vision closes with a declaration of the return of Israel to their own land, when the desolation foretold in the previous verses shall have been accomplished in extent and in duration; the measure of their correction being, that they should be expelled for a time from Judea, not swept away for ever; their sentence being, not the annihilation of their nation, nor yet its perpetual expulsion, but its banishment for a term of years: that over, the way is opened for their return. What power is intended in the first clause, “the Lord shall beat off from the channel of the river (the Euphrates), unto the stream of Egypt” (the Nile), is left undetermined. A recent and striking coincidence with this statement of the prophet

was exemplified in the late revolt of Mehemet Ali against the Porte. He carried his invasion of the Turkish dominions just to the point indicated here, viz., to the banks of the Euphrates; every attempt made to extend it beyond the river failed; and from this point was he driven back, inch by inch, by the allies of Turkey, until he was made to retrace his steps as far as the Nile. Literally, he was beat off from the channel of the river Euphrates unto the stream of Egypt. This circumstance is not advanced as the fulfilment of the prediction; the event alone can determine that; but it shows how readily prophecies, apparently the most obscure, may receive at any moment the most literal accomplishment. The beating off of an enemy apparently, from the Euphrates to the Nile, this being the region in which Judea is situated, is represented as preparatory to the return of the children of Israel, that event immediately following the other. The fulfilment of this part of the prophecy, in so far as the two tribes are concerned, may be said to be going forward in their present history. The time has now passed away when it would have been death for a Jew to have been found in Judea. For many years past, and of late more than ever, they have been returning in small numbers, which, speaking of them as a nation, may be said to be one by one. That nation is now in a transition state; its sufferings and its shame, with exceptions in particular places, being arrested, but its national position and privileges not recovered. How soon and how easily the whole may receive a literal accomplishment, is illustrated by events which are occurring at the present moment. In Turkey, to which Syria is at present subject, the Jew, by an edict of the Sultan, possesses equal liberties with the Mahometan. One of his latest concessions was to give permission for the erection of a synagogue on mount Zion. It is, however, of the ten tribes of Israel that the text seems specially to speak; it is of them that it is said

that their return will be one by one, and that Assyria and Egypt will give up their proportion (13). It is their return which is to succeed the event described in the 12th verse. Of the many attempts which have been made to trace the existence of the ten lost tribes, none has been more successful than that of Dr. Grant, who, not without much appearance of probability, and with many striking facts to support his views, considers them to be the Nestorian Christians in Assyria, the land whither they were carried.<sup>1</sup> That people consists of different distinct tribes. They were subjected a few years ago to a series of barbarities and cruelties scarcely surpassed in history, in which many thousands of them perished, and others, even whole tribes, were driven from their own territory. Their case exactly tallies with the description of being "ready to perish in the land of Assyria;" and nothing would have been more natural than that the Sultan, when the atrocities from which they recently suffered were being perpetrated, should have directed their flight to the fertile and uninhabited plains of Palestine. This may not occur—they may not be the fragments of the ten tribes; and, even although both of these suppositions were to be realized, the event might not be the fulfilment of the prediction: but the coincidence is singular and instructive, and will not weaken the expectations, or discourage the watchfulness of those who look for a fulfilment to the letter of Scripture, of every prophecy relating to the seed of Jacob.—The sounding of the great trumpet appears to designate the same thing as the lifting up an ensign or standard, see v. 26. The language is borrowed from the blowing of the trumpet on the evening of the day of atonement, which announced the commencement of the year of jubilee. That year has its antitype much more exactly in the circumstances of Christ's reign

<sup>1</sup> This is denied by Layard in his recent work on Nineveh, who considers that the Nestorians are Chaldeans.



on earth in righteousness, than in those of the introduction of the gospel dispensation.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

THIS chapter forms a separate prophecy regarding Ephraim or Israel, and Judah. Like the others which relate to the same people, it consists of complaints of their sins, and denunciations of judgments in consequence of them, along with intimations of future deliverance and prosperity. The prophecy reaches onward to the same point as the previous one, if indeed it does not commence with it. This is rendered more probable from its passing so soon as in the 4th verse, to events yet to come.

1-4. *Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of them that are overcome (or, broken) with wine! Behold, the Lord (or, Adonai) hath a mighty and strong one, which, as a tempest of hail, and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand. The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, shall be trodden under feet (or, with feet): And the glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley, shall be a fading flower, and as the hasty fruit before the summer; which when he that looketh upon it seeth, while it is yet in his hand he eateth (or, swalloweth) up.*

These verses describe the natural advantages in point of position, in beauty of situation, and richness of neighbourhood, which Samaria possessed, with its approaching downfall and the destruction of the inhabitants of the land. That Samaria, the capital of Ephraim or the ten tribes of Israel, is here intended, there can be no doubt. The city was built on a hill covered with terraces to the summit—thus presenting so much resemblance to a crown of flowers as to suggest the comparison—and was situated

at the head of an extensive valley of singular fertility and beauty. The description of the prophet is exact. She was the crown of pride, or the proud crown of the inhabitants—of glorious beauty, on the head of the rich valley, (in the original singular, not valleys.) So striking was the beauty of the city and its situation, and such its strength, that one traveller at least (Richardson) thought it superior to Jerusalem, which was “beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole land.” The same figure is carried out, and the fate of Samaria for her sin, (against whose inhabitants is brought the universal charge of drunkenness, which is enlarged on in the 7th verse, and is advanced in other places,) is compared to that of a crown or garland of flowers when fading (1), or when beaten on and destroyed by a storm of hail or a flood of rain (2), or when trampled beneath the feet (3). Her sure and utter destruction is also represented by the eager eating of the first ripe figs<sup>1</sup> (4), which one plucks, and not preserving, uses at once. So Samaria would not be spared by her eager assailants. This prediction of the destruction of that capital, while it includes the invasion by the Assyrians, cannot be understood as limited to that occasion, as it was not then reduced to the condition indicated here. That was but the first step in the process of its decay. After the removal of the ten tribes to Assyria, it was repeopled from Babylon, Hamath, &c., and it was not until captured by Hyrcanus a hundred years before Christ, that it was levelled with the ground. It was subsequently rebuilt, but its fate though deferred was sure, and now a miserable village occupies a corner of its site. The prediction must therefore be understood as extending far beyond its capture by Assyria up to the time of its complete overthrow—as extending even to the period yet future pointed to by the following verse.

<sup>1</sup> The hasty fruit פִּיבִּירָה, the early fig which ripens in June, before summer, the common fig not being eatable till August.—*Ges.*

5, 6. *In that day shall the Lord of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people, and for a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment, and for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate.*

As the previous verses had not their fulfilment in the capture of the city by the king of Assyria, the former of these cannot refer to the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin under Hezekiah, as the "residue" of the people. Even although the application were possible in regard to the point of time, their state then did not warrant the application to it of the very strong language here employed; and, besides, as the former part of the prophecy is limited to the ten tribes who did not return, so that there was no residue of them to whom the Lord could be for a crown of glory, so must this. The whole then must be understood of the future condition of Israel when restored to their own land. Similar language is often applied to their circumstances then. The expression, "the residue of his people," is never applied to the national continuance of the two tribes of Judah, subsequent to the removal of the ten tribes of Israel, but it, or the parallel expression, "the remnant of his people," is of constant application to those of the twelve tribes who shall survive the final judgments of the nation. "It shall come to pass in that day that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more stay upon him that smote them—the remnant shall return unto the mighty God," x. 20; "The residue of my people shall spoil them, the remnant of my people shall possess them," Zeph. ii. 9. The figure in the first verse, "a crown of glory," is here adapted to Christ, and the same thing in substance is often foretold of the state of restored and converted Israel: "The Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee," lx. 2; "In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious (literally beauty and glory), for them that are escaped

of Israel," iv. 2. But the final prosperity of that people is constantly associated with the punishment of her enemies. She, along with Judah, will be made the instrument of inflicting this. It is she, as Christ's instrument, who will sit in judgment (6), and who will turn the battle to the gate of her enemies: "Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion—thou shalt beat in pieces many people," Amos iv. 13. And for this work a spirit of judgment<sup>1</sup> and strength will be given her by the Lord: "Fear them not, for I am with thee—I will strengthen thee—They that strive with thee, shall perish—I will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, fear not—I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument."—"Turn the battle to the gate," that is, not only repel the attack, but carry the battle to the enemy's gate. See the same idea in 2 Sam. ii. 23.

7, 8. *But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way: the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment. For all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean.*

These verses and the remainder of the chapter form, in a great measure, an enlargement of the previous part. The cause of Ephraim's downfall was their haughty independence of God. Samaria was their crown. The cause of their future prosperity will be their humble dependence on the Lord. He will be made their crown. And what follows of this chapter contains details of their departure from God by Israel and Judah, and of the manner in which he will at last recover them from their own ways to his own. The charge of intemperance is first brought against Israel; even the priest and the prophet, who were prohibited the use of wine before engaging in their official

<sup>1</sup> Strictly the original noun, see i. 21, signifies the act of judging, but has also the meaning of judgment, in the popular sense of punishment. This idea is implied in the text as in other cases. The same expression, "The spirit of judgment," in ch. iv. 4, evidently implies punishment.



duties, Lev. x. 14, are described as being so much addicted to this vice, as to be under its influence at those periods when they sought the will of God in vision, and when sitting as judges. The iniquity is represented as universal (8)—as extended to the circle of every household. Every table at which they sit down—every place—is polluted.

9-13. *Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine (or, the hearing)? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be (or, hath been) upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little: for with stammering (or, stammerings of) lips, and another tongue, will he speak (or, he hath spoken) to this people. To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear. But the word of the Lord was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.*

The subject of complaint which is introduced next, is the unbelief of Israel—a more marked and better attested feature of their character than the preceding. The question is put, “Whom shall he (God) teach knowledge?” and the answer in substance is, children; as if saying, those whose understandings are accessible to the truths of God are not such as proud Ephraim was, but such as have the disposition of children. The same idea seems expressed here as when it is said, that those who desire the sincere milk of the word must become like babes—that those who would enter the kingdom of God must lay aside the character of men, and become like little children. Men are children in spiritual things, and must be treated as such; and so had God dealt with Israel. The most abundant provision had been made by his law and the expounding of it, for conveying to them the knowledge of himself and of his will—precept had been added to precept (10). This view of the import of this obscure and perplexing passage is supported by the 12th verse, in

which it is said, in plain language, that God had taught the nation of his rest, but in vain. Accordingly, it is foretold that the Almighty would alter his way of speaking to them; he would try the voice of judgment where the voice of persuasion had failed; he would seek to convey that instruction from the book of Providence which he had not succeeded in conveying from the book of Revelation; he would speak with stammering (foreign or strange) lips, and another tongue (11). But before enlarging upon this, he justifies the severity of their approaching judgments, by declaring how they had been told of, and had spurned, the way of peace (12), and repeats how every means had been used for their instruction, and precept been added to precept (13), but all to no purpose; their neglect and abuse of privileges would result in their fall and ruin.—“That they might go, and fall backward,” must be regarded as the effect, not the object, of their receiving line upon line. The same failure of God’s dealings with them is described in a previous chapter: “Let him (the Lord) be your fear, and let him be your dread. He shall be for a stone of stumbling, and many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken,” viii. 14, 15. Lowth, who is followed by Barnes and others, adopts a more ingenious, but less natural, view of the passage. Understanding verse 9 as expressing the ridicule of the scoffers mentioned in verse 14, he considers the import to be—“What, say they, doth he treat us as infants just weaned? doth he teach us like children, perpetually inculcating the same elementary lessons, precept after precept?” The strange tongue he refers to the Assyrians. This view requires the whole passage to be understood of the captivity in Assyria, which, if that given above (1) be correct, is a fatal objection.

14-16. *Wherefore hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem: because ye have said, We have*

*made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement ; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us : for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves. Therefore thus saith the Lord God (or, Adonai Jehovah), Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation : he that believeth shall not make haste.*

A warning, which, from the connexion, must be understood as extending to the close of the 22d verse, addressed to the tribes of Ephraim and Judah, although only the most conspicuous offenders are named, is uttered against the Jewish rulers, who are said scornfully to refuse to hear the word of the Lord. That warning is to this effect, that God would send one who, while he would prove a sure foundation to his servants (16), would tread down his foes (17-22). The party to whom the warning was addressed having been intimated (14), the cause which made the warning necessary is stated (15). If this language is to be understood literally as that of the Jewish rulers, it indicates the proudest conceivable defiance of God ; and in other places we find language breathing the same spirit put into their lips : “ Woe unto them that sin as it were with a cart-rope : that say, Let him make speed, and hasten his work, that we may see it ; that call evil good, and good evil,” v. 18-20. But more probably it expresses what was virtually their language—the language of their lives, if not of their lips ;—it expresses the view in which God regarded it.—“ They made a covenant,” that is, they secured their ruin. “ They made lies their refuge,” that is, they trusted in what was false and sinful, as if it could be their refuge. The language of their actions, in short, to God, is said to be, that they needed no foundation for security but one of their own ; the language of God to them is, that he had laid one for them in Zion. The connexion in which this, the 16th verse, is applied in the New Testament, shows at least one of the particulars referred to, when it is said that the nation made a covenant with death, and made lies their refuge. Speaking of

Christ, Peter says, "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders ; neither is there salvation in any other," Acts iv. 11, 12. And again, "Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore ? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law ; as it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling-stone," Rom. ix. 31-33. In these cases, the implied charge of seeking salvation apart from Christ—of seeking it by the works of the law—is placed in evident contrast with seeking it through Christ, the foundation laid for it. This sin—this grievous affront done to God, and to his Son, and to his scheme—which was chargeable upon the nation previous to the time of Christ, and during the period of his teaching on earth, and during all subsequent time up to the present hour—"for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament"—may be regarded as that referred to, at least as one element in that referred to, in the previous verse. Those who were so guilty were in the highest degree scornful men, and had made a covenant with death. Rejecting the righteousness of Christ to cling to one's own is, in the fullest sense, to bind oneself to death. The applications of the 16th verse which are made in the New Testament show that it is descriptive of Christ. At the same time, its application by the apostles to the first appearing of the Saviour in Judea, does not necessarily imply that the whole meaning of the passage was exhausted then. The haughty rejection of God's word by the Jewish nation, which immediately precedes the 16th verse, will go on until he build up Zion, and appear in his glory. Not until then will Jerusalem be holy. And the judgments which immediately follow the 16th verse will be inflicted in connexion with his reigning on Mount Zion : "The Lord shall roar from on high, and utter his voice from his holy habitation (in Joel, from Zion and Jerusalem). He shall mightily



roar upon his habitation ; he will plead with all flesh," Jer. xxv. 30. From the connexion with the context, and also from the circumstance that in the full sense in which other passages show that it will yet be the case, the language must be understood of that period when Christ, having appeared in his glory in Zion, shall become the foundation and cornerstone—the support and ornament of that spiritual building, his Church, of which all flesh, both Jew and Gentile, shall then become living stones. Then "he that believeth shall not make haste," or shall wait patiently for the fulfilment of the promise just declared. The grace of patience will be tried in the times referred to, when there shall be "distress of nations with perplexity, men's hearts failing them for fear." A secondary meaning of the original, which has been preferred by some, viz., "he that believeth shall not flee away," would refer to the contrast between believers, to whom in Mount Zion there will be deliverance, and those who shall call on the mountains to cover them—who shall "flee as men fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah," Zech. xiv. 5.

17-21. *Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet ; and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-place. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand ; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by (or, a treading down to) it. From the time that it goeth forth it shall take you : for morning by morning shall it pass over, by day and by night ; and it shall be a vexation only to understand the report (or, when he shall make you to understand doctrine). For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it ; and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it. For the Lord shall rise up as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work ; and bring to pass his act, his strange act.*

The justice and severity of the judgments that would befall Judah and Israel are next declared. As the mechanic works by rule,—by line and plummet, so would God judge the nation justly (17), neither taking ought

from, nor adding to, their deserved punishment: "Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness." See i. 27. A variety of expressive figures is then employed to denote the severity of her merited punishment. It is compared to the destruction caused by hail (17, 18)—to the ravages of a flood—to the pain of a scourge—to the trampling of an army. These judgments will expose the futility of every covenant but that with God—of every foundation but that on the Rock of Ages. It is impossible to say how far this description may be figurative. The frequent reference to the elements of nature as being called in to act a part,—as constituting by their violence a prominent feature in the Divine judgments of the last days, seems to require a literal interpretation. Just as fearful sights and signs from heaven, according to the prophecy, preceded the destruction of Jerusalem, as if nature were convulsed at the approach of such a catastrophe, so, only on a scale immeasurably greater, does it seem foretold that the elements will be employed as auxiliaries in the overthrow of his enemies in the great and terrible day of the Lord. On this point it is written: "Thou shalt be visited of the Lord of hosts with thunder and with earthquake, and with great noise; with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire," xxix. 6; "Behold the whirlwind of the Lord goeth forth with fury, a continuing whirlwind: it shall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked," Jer. xxx. 23. Since there were signs in the heavens, as has been recorded by Tacitus and others, previous to the destruction of Jerusalem,—since the elements have been used already in the punishment of sin, as in the case of the antediluvian world and the destruction of the cities of the plain, why should not these predictions receive as literal a fulfilment, and the elements be used again as instruments of judgment upon the nations of the earth in the great day of the Lord? The idea of a flood or storm seems to be continued

in the 19th verse, whose import appears to be, that from the moment the elements, or judgments represented by the elements, should be let loose, there would be no intermission until the measure of Judah's punishment should be executed ; and so terrible would they be, that the very report of them would fill every breast with terror. There is no alarm which produces such consternation in the bosom as that which is caused by convulsions of nature, and to this circumstance the clause, " it shall be a vexation or alarm to understand or hear the report," seems to refer. The introduction of this class of fears and dangers among those of the last days, is not to introduce a small evil. The dismay caused, for example, by the destructive eruption of the volcanic mountain, in the villages and cities at its base, which it threatens to overwhelm, far exceeds that, for instance, caused by the approach of an enemy. Such dismay as this seems often referred to as possessing the enemies of God in the days of great tribulation : " Men's hearts failing them for fear ;" " all faces gathering blackness ;" " distress of nations with perplexity," is language peculiarly descriptive of the dismay excited when the powers of nature are disturbed and let loose, and threaten destruction. The following verse (20) has very much the appearance of a proverb. It expresses by another comparison the trials of men in those days. The uneasiness and distress caused by the shortness of a bed, are taken to symbolize the uneasy and restless perplexity which shall then fill the minds of men ; or the proverb may denote that then every refuge of man's own creating will be found vain and worse than useless, like a bed too short for a man to lie down on. The final destruction of the enemies of God is further likened (21) to that sent upon the Philistines when smitten by David at Baal-perazim, and from Gibeon even unto Gaza, 1 Chron. xiv. 11 ; 2 Sam. v. 20. On that occasion, in reference to the suddenness and completeness of the victory which the

Lord gave David then, it is said, that he called the name of the place Baal-perazim, "because the Lord hath broken forth upon thine enemies before me, as the breach of waters." So, sudden and terrible, like the bursting forth of water, will be his fury when he shall arise to judge terribly the earth. When the doings of the Lord so full of long-suffering and love, are contrasted with his doings, as they are foretold, on that day when the wrath of the Lamb shall be kindled ; when he shall be red in his apparel ; when he shall trample the people in his fury ; the work of that day, or rather of that night, may well be called "his strange work." It will be strange in the sight of nature : "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood." It will be strange to the inhabitants of the earth : "For in such an hour as they think not the Son of man shall come." It will be strange in the sight of the Jews ; for returning as they will to Judea, adhering to the requirements of the Mosaic law, still dreaming only of a temporal deliverer, they, the favoured people, will expect blessings, not fresh and enlarged curses, when restored to their own land. It will be strange even in the sight of God himself : "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim ? how shall I deliver thee, Israel ? how shall I make thee as Admah ? how shall I set thee as Zeboim ? Mine heart is turned within me, and my repentings are kindled together," Hos. xi. 8. Men may doubt the possibility of such a work on the ground of its strangeness ; they may repeat the old infidel argument, "since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were since the creation of the world ;" but judgments have been poured out already in connexion with Israel, at which the ears of them that heard them have tingled ; and, in the light of prophecy, it is an argument not against, but for their repetition on a yet greater scale, that they will be a strange work.

*22. Now therefore be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong :*



*for I have heard from the Lord God (or, Adonai Jehovah) of hosts a consumption, even determined upon the whole earth.*

Having described the judgment that was uttered against the land, the nation is again invited to cease from their unnatural contempt of God, for the impending consumption (destruction) would inevitably come. An illustration of the certainty of this is added in the remainder of the chapter.

23-29. *Give ye ear, and hear my voice ; hearken, and hear my speech. Doth the ploughman plough all day to sow ? doth he open and break the clods of his ground ? When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat (or, the wheat in the principal place, and barley in the appointed place), and the appointed barley, and the rye (or, spelt), in their place (or, border) ? For his God doth instruct him to discretion, and (or, he bindeth it in such sort as his God) doth teach him. For the fitches are not thrashed with a thrashing instrument, neither is a cart-wheel turned about upon the cummin ; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod. Bread-corn is bruised ; because he will not ever be thrashing it, nor break it with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it with his horsemen. This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.*

Particular attention is invited to the illustration which is given in these verses, by the repetition, again and again, of the call, to give heed ; and the emphasis that is laid on the request “ to listen,” is not uncalled for in these days. An objection might arise—and it is one which is urged still, and which leads men to shut their eyes to the mighty events that are yet to be enacted on the theatre of Judea. How unlikely, it is said, that such disasters should still lie shut up in the womb of time ;—what advantage can result from replacing Israel in their own land, and from deluging Judea with bloodshed ;—how much more natural to suppose that matters should proceed as they are doing—that the Almighty should conduct his government of the world in future ages as in the past. A case in point, an apposite illustration from husbandry,

is adduced to remove the delusion. The ploughman does not plough always, (all day, in the sense of every day, always), (24), he proceeds to break the clods, and make the surface smooth for the seed. Neither is he always harrowing, he proceeds to sow his different seeds (25), instructed by that understanding with which God hath gifted him (26). Neither is he ever sowing, he proceeds to thresh in the way each grain requires (27). Neither is he ever threshing, he bruises the corn (28), and prepares it for food ; in all these steps guided by that reason which he hath received from God (29). The lesson taught by the illustration is, that God, too, has an object in his government of the world : neither will he be always sowing. The present regular and peaceful course of things is no argument that it will continue, any more than the sowing of the husbandman, day after day, proves that he will sow always. The inference from his sowing is, that by and by he will reap the harvest : and so the time will come when God, who is now sowing, will reap, and thresh, and bruise. As well might it be argued, that the husbandman will always sow or plough, as that the dealings of God towards Israel will ever continue as they are. The inference from their present condition is all the other way—that the dealings of Providence with them will not continue as they are. The same agricultural figure of harvest-reaping is employed also in Joel iii. 13, and Rev. xiv. 15. The different instruments used for threshing grain in the East are enumerated in the 27th verse, viz., a threshing instrument, supposed to be what Niebuhr describes as “ a sort of sledge consisting of three rollers ;” a cart, which is provided with a number of wheels—both of these are dragged over the grain ; the rod or flail, and the feet of horses.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

THE prophecy contained in this chapter relates to Jerusalem; and as much of it refers to events yet future, as will appear from the examination of it, it must be understood as describing generally, up to the period of their termination, the judgments that were to come on the city. Perhaps it also may be regarded, as starting from the point reached in the previous predictions,—as referring from the outset to the events of the last days, so soon does the prediction pass clearly to these. The whole passage points to Jerusalem as the city intended. Like the prophecies which have preceded, this one has been applied to some individual siege of Jerusalem, as that by Shalmanezar, that by Nebuchadnezzar; but in none of these have the facts here predicted been realized: or, where a more extended view has been taken, it has been applied, as in similar cases, to the circumstances of the Church—a view which requires the substitution of Church where God has written Jerusalem, which would be just as warrantable and as truthful in the historical portions of Scripture as in the prophetical.

1, 2. *Woe to Ariel, to Ariel (or, O Ariel), the city (or, of the city) where David dwelt! add ye year to year, let them kill sacrifices (or, cut off the heads). Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be heaviness and sorrow: and it shall be unto me as Ariel.*

The distinguishing Ariel, as “the city where David dwelt,” together with the whole scope of the chapter, shows that Jerusalem is intended. The ironical form in which she is here addressed is unusual, “Add ye year to year,”

that is, go on as ye are doing ; pursue to the end your guilty course. It is the same form of speech as occurs in Eccles. xi. 9, and a few other places. The clause, "Let them kill the sacrifices," may be translated also, "Let the festivals revolve;" and this is in accordance with the most usual signification of the words, and is generally preferred by critics. The two translations are, however, essentially the same. Let the festivals revolve, is just let them (continue to) kill the sacrifices. It is startling language, when the Almighty says to the sinful city, Go on ; but while he does this, he points out the doom which they were rushing upon ; he warns them that their course would lead them to distress and sorrow. The Ariel in the close of the second verse should evidently be translated. The word is compounded of two, which may be rendered either "the lion of God," or "the altar of God." According to the former translation, the allusion can be only to that time when Jerusalem shall be made the instrument of punishing the enemies of God in the great day of the Lord. The very figure is applied to Israel elsewhere in reference to that event : "The remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people, as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep," Mic. v. 6. It implies the same as when it is said, "Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion, for I will make thine horn iron, and thy hoofs brass, and thou shalt beat in pieces many people." The adoption of the other translation, "it shall be unto me as the altar of God," gives a meaning equally supported by other Scripture. Jerusalem will be the altar of the Lord when, in reference to the same time, it is said of him, that his "fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem," xxxi. 9. It is also written, quite in keeping with the figure of an altar, in reference to the judgments that shall overtake men in the last days, "Ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of my sacrifice which I have



sacrificed for you," Ezek. xxxix. 19 : and again, " The day of the Lord is at hand ; for the Lord hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests. And it shall come to pass in the day of the Lord's sacrifice," &c., Zeph. i. 7, 8. This latter view appears to suit better the context which is predictive of Jerusalem's troubles, the Jewish nation being involved in these judgments. While Jerusalem, or its neighbourhood, will be the altar on which the nations of the earth will pay the penalty for national sin, she will yet there first pay the full penalty of her own.

3, 4. *And I will camp against thee round about, and will lay siege against thee with a mount, and I will raise forts against thee. And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper (or, peep, or, chirp) out of the dust.*

The facts predicted in the first of these verses have been realized in the siege by the Romans, and on other occasions ; but this circumstance does not tie down the prophecy to that particular event. It foretells that such things would be, and they have been, and they may be again. The depth of degradation which Jerusalem has long since reached, and still retains, is forcibly represented by her speaking from the ground and from the dust (4). She does speak more impressively than any language, of God's truth, and justice, and power ; but it is from her ruins, from her dust, from the ground.

5-8. *Moreover, the multitude of thy strangers shall be like small dust, and the multitude of the terrible ones shall be as chaff that passeth away ; yea, it shall be at an instant suddenly. Thou shalt be visited of the Lord of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire. And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, even all that fight against her and her munition, and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night-vision. It shall even be as when an hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth ; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty : or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh ;*

*but he awaketh, and, behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite : so shall the multitude of all the nations be that fight against mount Zion.*

There now follows a description of the sudden and complete overthrow of the enemies who shall finally be gathered against Jerusalem ; they shall pass away suddenly like dust, like chaff. The same figure has already occurred in a foregoing description of the same event, see xvii. 13, where the portion of those who spoil the Jews is, that they “ shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and as thistle-down before the whirlwind.” Those disturbances among the elements of nature, which have been before adverted to as accompanying—perhaps constituting in part—the judgments of Israel and of her enemies, are again introduced (6), see xxviii. 17. Here the language is applied to the Israelites themselves ; in other places, as in the following chapter, verse 30, it is applied to the hostile nations who shall invade Judea. The quick and complete removal of these foes is again denoted by a very significant figure (7). Suddenly, as a dream passes away, would be the removal of their enemies. This figure, too, is employed elsewhere to denote the same occurrence : “ When the Lord turned back the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream,” Ps. cxxvi. 1. The disappointment of their foes in the deliverance of their anticipated prey is represented (8) by that of the hungry dreamer who dreameth that he eateth, and when he awaketh his soul is empty. The language in which these enemies are described—“ the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel”—is not strictly applicable to any past siege and overthrow of Jerusalem, the most important of which have been effected by individual nations, and by proportionally small armies, the Roman army, for example, consisting of only 60,000 men ; but it corresponds exactly with what is foretold of the combinations formed against Israel before the terrible day of

the Lord come; in regard to which it is said, "I will gather all nations"—"the Lord will plead with all flesh"—"I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people."

9. *Stay yourselves, and wonder; cry ye out, and cry (or, take your pleasure and riot): they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink.*

This verse may be considered either as a call to the Jewish nation to contemplate the utter destruction of their foes, whose disappointment had just been described, and who are represented as reeling under the severity of their judgments; or as describing the amazement of the Jews when visited themselves by judgments under the weight of which they would stagger. The first clauses are expressed very forcibly in the original, which is well brought out in Lowth's translation as follows:—"They are struck with amazement, they stand astonished, they stare with a look of stupid surprise." The figure employed in the last clause is applied in other Scripture to the overthrow of the nations hostile to Judea, thus:—"I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh, and they shall be drunken with their own blood," xlix. 26. This spectacle may well excite the wonder of Judah; but the infliction of their own judgments, which seem here intended, will not less excite their amazement, expecting, as they will do, nothing but blessing when restored to their own land. The figure of drunkenness is applied in Scripture to themselves as well as to their enemies: "Hear now this, thou afflicted and drunken, but not with wine, thus saith the Lord, Behold I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my fury; thou shalt no more drink it again," li. 21-23.

10-12. *For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers (or, heads), the seers hath he covered. And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book (or, letter) that is sealed, which men deliver*

*to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee : and he saith, I cannot ; for it is sealed. And the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee : and he saith, I am not learned.*

The prophet now, addressing the Jewish nation, describes the judicial blindness of their understandings. The same truth is taught still more broadly in other places, as in chapter vi. 9, 10, which see—"Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy." Scripture makes such a declaration, but does not answer the inquiries connected with it which curiosity suggests. It silences every complainer with the question, "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?"—a question which the over-curious, who, unlike David, exercise themselves in things too high for them, will find as hard to answer as those to which the doctrine of the text gives rise. The doctrine itself is revealed, but the questions which have been hung upon it are among "the secret things which belong unto the Lord." The passage, or rather the fact which it announces, has to be regarded as an illustration of the sovereignty of God ; and it is by such illustrations as are presented by the case of the Jews, by God pouring on them the spirit of deep sleep, that we see the nature of this attribute in the divine character brought to light and developed. How but in such ways could it be exercised?—how but by such illustrations could this attribute of the Almighty be made intelligible to man ? This spiritual blindness is described as not only a characteristic of the body of the people, but also of the prophets or seers. None can any more understand the vision, that is, the will and revelation of God then made known by vision, than a man can read a sealed book (11, 12). How truly has this been the case with the Jews to a degree almost incredible, were it not matter of history and sight. It was so in the days of Paul, and now, 1800 years later, his description is as true to the



letter; it may be taken up still; "even unto this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament." It cannot be added,—and in the reading of the New; for it they do not read. In regard to it, the reply of the Jew to the request, "Read this, I pray thee," is, "I cannot."

13-14. *Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: therefore, behold, I will proceed to do (or, I will add) a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder; for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.*

The hypocrisy of the nation and its punishment are here described. The first of these verses is applied by our Lord to the Jews of his day: "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me," Matt. xv. 8. Where can be found such attachment to the letter of the commandment, along with such neglect of its spirit, as has been manifested by this nation from that day until now?—the shadow sought, the substance scorned—Moses honoured, Christ trampled on. How descriptive, too, that their fear and worship of God are taught by the precept of men. It is not even the laws and ordinances of Moses that are honoured, but these as they are interpreted and mutilated by their rabbis and teachers. These sit in Moses' seat;—they sit in Christ's seat, teaching for his doctrines their own commandments. A corresponding punishment is threatened (14), one directed against those leaders and wise men whom they honoured in the place of Christ, but affecting the whole nation,—their wisdom would perish. This is often employed to denote a heavy judgment. Thus, among the afflictions of Egypt there is this one, "I will destroy the counsel thereof. Surely the

princes of Zoan are fools, the counsel of the wise counselors of Pharaoh is become brutish," xix. 11. The same calamity is often pronounced against Judah, "The wise men are ashamed: lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord; and what wisdom is in them?" Jer. viii. 9. And how amply has this prediction been realized? What have the wise men of Judah done for her during the last 1800 years? What are they doing? What can they do? With their country lying uninhabited, appearing as if it might become the property of any power that set its eye upon it, they cannot repossess themselves of it. The wisdom of their wise men is perished.

15, 16. *Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us? Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay: for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding?*

There is nothing definite enough in this verse (15) to determine what particular sin is intended. It is declared, that with whatever secrecy they might devise or execute their plans, their turning of things upside down—their perverse schemings, would be like clay in the hands of the potter (16). Whatever shape they might assume, the Lord could alter or reverse them. As well might the clay say to the potter, "he made me not," as the Jews say that they could carry out their purposes independently of God. The passage has received recent illustrations in the part which the Jews have acted in the late revolutionary movements of continental Europe. It is well known how large a share Jewish influence and Jewish gold have had in exciting and fostering the spirit of revolution: "They (the Jews) have taken an active part (in Germany) in all these proceedings; and, cruelly treated by the *Christian state*, they have directed all their talents and means to overthrow the State and Christianity, believing that both

are alike inimical to their political liberty. As editors and correspondents of almost all the influential newspapers, and as public speakers in the great assemblies, they have excited the middle and lower classes, have promised them great liberties, and good payment for their work.—The Jews became the heroes of the day, and led public opinion whereto they pleased.”—*Letter from Rev. G. Schwartz, Nov. 9, 1849.* But in how little have these “works in the dark” resulted; how has their “turning of things upside down” been esteemed as the potter’s clay; and how surely has “wo” been the fruit that they have reaped! One general consequence of the late European commotions has been the infliction of fresh exactions upon those who were the movers in, and fomentors of those revolutions. Their late political and revolutionary movements form a new and remarkable sign of Jewish times.—But from the general form of the 16th verse, “wo unto them,” it may perhaps be understood not as referring to the schemes of the Jewish leaders only, but to the counsels of others on their account, particularly as for many ages not only has the wisdom of their wise men perished, but this fate has befallen the wise men themselves, and the destinies of the nation have passed, humanly speaking, into other hands. Supposing that the counsellors referred to are those generally who hold the balance of the nation’s fate, it would be easy to multiply illustrations of the prophecy, that their schemes have been clay in the hands of God. How many plans have been formed, or may still be forming, for the return of the nation to Judea, the issue of which has been, and will be, until God’s own time be come, that he has moulded them as he pleased. In addition to numerous illustrations of the futility of all past arrangements for the prosperity of Judea, the very recent history of that land furnishes a striking instance, how God treats human counsellings in regard to it as potter’s clay. It is

but the other year, that the combined powers of Europe, in order to recover Judea to Turkey, expelled from it Ibrahim Pasha, the son of the ruler of Egypt, who had seized it. They hoped by that step to better the condition of the country, and what was the issue? Why, that under Turkish rule, or rather want of rule, the land became more disorganized than ever; and these powers had cause to regret the expulsion from it of that severe but active prince, whose government effected comparative security and quiet. How is Syria to be governed and made prosperous? is a problem which the combined wisdom of these powers cannot solve. The settlement of it is taken out of human hands. The wisdom of Gentile, as well as of Jewish wise men, in regard to it, has ceased. But although all human schemes have thus proved futile, the promises of prosperity for Judea remain recorded in the counsel of God, and will not be forgotten.

17-21. *Is it not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest? And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. The meek also shall increase (or, add) their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. For the terrible one is brought to nought, and the scorner is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity are cut off: that make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought.*

Here the prophecy looks forward to the time when the purposes of God regarding Israel will be fulfilled. The period is determined by what is said of Lebanon: its fertility is to follow, in "a very little while," the movements of the Jews described previously; and when its fertility shall be restored, the promises made to the seed of Jacob will be fulfilled. It consists of a double range of mountains in the north of Syria, the lower forming one of the finest parts of that land, and being distinguished by the beauty of its scenery. Hence it is called "that



goodly mountain and Lebanon," Deut. iii. 25. Hence, too, in a description of the desolation of the land, where even its choicest regions are mentioned by name as participating in the universal ruin, Lebanon is specified: "Lebanon is ashamed and hewn down," or withered away, xxxiii. 9. This is a point which it has not reached, but which it is reaching fast, the testimony of eye-witnesses showing that desolation was recently proceeding rapidly there—that the hand of judgment is even now to be seen at work. But after the desolation marked out for it is reached, it will be restored to what it was, when God shall remember the land. That will be, when his favour shall return to the seed of Jacob (18). These two events are frequently classed together. Of the same period and events it is written similarly: "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them (for Israel), and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly. The glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it," xxxv. 1, 2. The connexion is marked with still more distinctness in the following passage: "The palaces shall be forsaken;—until the Spirit be poured upon us (the Jews) from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest," xxxii. 15. The same connexion between the restored fertility of Lebanon and the land, and the establishment of the Messiah's kingdom upon earth, is pointed out in the text. In the verse following it is said; In that day, the day, that is, of the prosperity of the land, the veil, that is, of spiritual blindness, shall be taken from the eyes of all flesh. In the 35th chapter, just quoted, the same sequence of events is represented almost in the same words. There is, first, the prediction of the desert rejoicing; and it is added, "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped." Then also shall the meek—the oppressed, as in chapter xi.—and the poor rejoice in the Lord their

deliverer (19). It is in reference to this period that it is written, "The Lord hath appointed me to give unto them that mourn in Zion (Jerusalem) beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning." It is then that it will be sung, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God," lxi. iii. 10. The prophecy then notices (20) the overthrow of the foes of Israel—the enemies who shall be gathered together against her, who are repeatedly described as terrible ones, xxv. 3. They shall be brought to nothing—consumed—cut off—expressions not denoting perhaps their literal, their utter annihilation, although the slain of the Lord shall be many; but, at least, the utter overthrow of their power, the extinction of their hostility to Israel. But the language may be applied also to the state of the nation itself, from which sin shall then have been purged away by the spirit of burning. The following verse (21) appears to be an enlargement of the last clause of the preceding. Its ambiguity has led to a variety of translations. Its general meaning is evident, as descriptive of a class who act unjustly and oppressively towards the innocent. Henderson's translation is as follows: "That condemned a man in his cause, laid snares for him that decided in the gate, and turned aside the righteous without ground." The general charge contained here is one which is often brought against Israel, and which is represented as a grievous sin in the sight of God: "I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins; they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate," Amos v. 12; "I will come near to you to judgment, and I will be a swift witness against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger, and fear not me, saith the Lord," Mal. iii. 5.

22-24. *Therefore thus saith the Lord, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob, Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither*

*shall his face now wax pale. But when he seeth his children, the work of mine hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear the God of Israel. They also that erred in spirit shall come to (or, shall know) understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine.*

When these things shall have come to pass—the last enemies of Israel cut down, and the wicked from among themselves purged away—those who, in the time of their long humiliation, have been the reproach of men, shall not then be ashamed, neither shall those whose faces in the day of their last judgments shall be turned into paleness, then wax pale: “Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. For thy Maker is thy husband,” liv. 4, 5. Then those of the nation who shall have returned at the national restoration of Israel to Judea, shall see the spectacle of the outcasts—the remnant—gathered and settled in quiet habitations in their own land (23), and shall praise and fear the Lord, whose doing it will be: “Thy people shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified,” lx. 21. Then an end shall be put for ever to the protracted blindness and rebellion of Israel (24), and they shall come to understanding: “Knowledge shall be the stability of thy times.”

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## CHAPTER XXX.

THIS chapter also appears distinctly to refer chiefly to events still to come in the history of Judah and Israel, both from its position among prophecies still unfulfilled,

and from the scope of the chapter itself. It has been applied by commentators to past events, the allusion to Egypt, at the commencement, being referred to incidents supposed to have occurred on an occasion of threatened hostilities by Sennacherib, or some other Assyrian monarch. This view, however, rests on a series of suppositions, none of which are authenticated by history. It requires the taking for granted that the alarm of an invasion was excited; that an alliance with Egypt was projected and resolved on; that a party was deputed to proceed there to effect it; that the aid asked was granted, but proved insufficient; that Israel or Egypt, (according to the view taken of verses 13, 14), suffered most disastrously by some means or other on the particular occasion. All these, and other suppositions, must be made before this chapter can be limited to past events. But apart from this objection, there are others. Different statements in the passage are utterly at variance with its application to any past incidents in Judah's history, or in Egypt's, if verses 13, 14 be understood of that nation. There the destruction of Egypt is represented as so overwhelming, that there will not be found in its wreck so much as a shred to take fire from the hearth, or water from the pit. Such a description has never been applicable to Egypt at any past period when Israel could have looked to her for help. Besides, the passage coincides so well with, and is so corroborated by, other Scripture, in the view of its being unfulfilled, as to justify and require this exposition of it. The prophecy refers to the common subjects of the sin of Judah—her punishment—the destruction of her enemies, and her ultimate prosperity; introducing the general subjects common with other prophecies, but varying in the details.

1, 2. *Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin: that walk to go down into Egypt, and*



*have not asked at my mouth ; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt !*

These verses proclaim wo to Judah in consequence of their applying to Egypt in a season of alarm, instead of betaking themselves to God. The charge which is here made against them resembles that contained in the 15th verse of the previous chapter. Under the theocratic government of Judah, those who took counsel of another king than God are justly denominated rebellious children. The foreign king, whose counsel and alliance they seek, is Pharaoh—the familiar name of the kings of Egypt, and which may be understood as representing any Egyptian king,—to whom an embassy is sent. That the Jewish nation should do so at a period still future is quite natural. Restored to their own country at first in their unconverted state, and exposed to the attack of those hostile nations which shall be gathered against Jerusalem, what more likely than that they should look to their neighbour Egypt for help? That nation promises soon to be in a position to furnish effectual aid to another. Her comparative prosperity since the accession of Mehemet Ali to the government, appears to contradict the predictions which foretold her degradation ; but these have been fulfilled in her bygone history. That she should yet be looked to for help by Israel, implies her restoration to some degree of prosperity ; and thus the circumstance that she appears again to be taking her place among the nations of the earth, corroborates prophecy.—In the expression, “that cover with a covering,” the idea, according to the received translation, is that of a defence or protection, called in the following verse, shadow. Lowth’s translation, which is generally preferred, is, “who ratify covenants.”<sup>1</sup>

3-7. *Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion. For his princes were at*

<sup>1</sup> Deriving from שָׁפַךְ, to pour out, to make a libation.

*Zoan, and his ambassadors came to Hanes. They were all ashamed of a people that could not profit them, nor be an help nor profit, but a shame, and also a reproach. The burden of the beasts of the south : Into the land of trouble and anguish, from whence come the young and old lion, the viper and fiery flying serpent, they will carry their riches upon the shoulders of young asses, and their treasures upon the bunches of camels, to a people that shall not profit them. For the Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose : therefore have I cried concerning this (or, to her), Their strength is to sit still.*

The disappointment of their hopes from Egypt, which, instead of being a source of support to the Jews, is made the cause of shame, is next described and dwelt upon. So it is similarly foretold, "They shall be ashamed of Egypt their glory," xx. 5; "Thou also shalt be ashamed of Egypt," Jer. ii. 36. The most obvious meaning of the 4th verse seems to be, to regard it as an amplification of a previous clause, "that walk to go down into Egypt." In token of the importance of the embassy, or the urgency of the case, the princes of Israel become her ambassadors, and are represented as reaching Zoan (Tanis, a royal residence in lower Egypt, now the rising village of Zaan), and Hanes, (considered by some to be an abbreviation of Taph-hanes, also a royal residence; by others to be Anusis in middle Egypt, called after the king of that name). The company of ambassadors is then represented (6) as proceeding through the intervening wilderness to Egypt, with a present to the monarch, which is carried by asses and camels. The description of the region to which the beasts of the south travel, that is, the asses and camels going to the south in which direction Egypt lies from Judea, is generally applicable to Egypt itself, and also to the intervening wilderness, which is described by Moses as "that great and terrible wilderness wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought," Deut. viii. 15. There is this exception, however, that the lion is not found in Egypt, for it is to it rather than to the intervening desert that the passage refers. But the expressions may be

understood figuratively, as in xiv. 29, where the similar expressions, serpent, cockatrice, fiery flying serpent, are clearly to be so explained, representing enemies, oppressors, of serpent-like disposition. The resolution to seek aid from Egypt—the arrival of the ambassadors in the country—and lastly, the carriage of the royal gift through the desert, are each followed by a declaration that all would be to no purpose.—The expression “burden” is the same here in the original as in many previous places, where it bears the signification of “wo.” See xiii. 1. In this instance, however, it appears clearly to have the primary signification of load, weight, in reference to the treasure carried by the asses. These are not here the subject of any calamitous prediction, as is implied in the other cases where the expression occurs.—“The old and young lion.” It is doubtful what distinction is denoted by the original here. It is generally supposed to be one, not of age, but of sex, expressing lions and lionesses.—The conclusion of the 7th verse appears, from the common version, to be addressed to the Jews, and to be parallel with what is said in the 15th verse, but the exegesis of the original determines Egypt to be the subject of the clause. The word translated strength, *רהב*, *rahab*, occurs, besides here, in li. 9; Ps. lxxxvii. 4, and lxxxix. 11, in which places it means Egypt. The primary signification is rage, insolence, pride. The whole clause may be understood as an epithet applied to Egypt, according to frequent Hebrew usage, expressive of the futility and worthlessness of her boasted profession of aid. Lowth translates, “Wherefore have I called her Rahab the inactive.”

8-11. *Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever (or, the latter day); that this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the Lord: which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things; speak unto us smooth things. prophesy deceits: get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.*

The prophet is here directed to record the sin of the nation. The expression "now go" evidently connects what follows with the preceding—with the case of seeking help from Egypt. The command to record the sin of the people in a tablet or book, that it might be, not at the time only, but for ever, before the nation, has been fulfilled by the prophet in committing what follows to writing, along with his other prophecies, whereby it still is before them as a warning against looking to Egypt, or to any human power for help.—The language, "that it may be for the time to come, for ever and ever," implies that the reference was not to a near period in Judah's history, but to a distant futurity, and thus favours the supposition that the whole relates to what is yet to come.—The expressions, "rebellious people," "lying children," &c., which refer to the general character of the nation, are explained by the following verses. To wish the Holy One of Israel to cease from before them (11), was rebellion;—to wish their seers and prophets to repeat to them smooth things and deceits (10) instead of the truth, was to be lying children;—to say, see not, prophecy not unto us right things, was to refuse to hear the word of the Lord. The prevalence and the guilt of this course are thus described by Jeremiah, v. 30, 31, "A wonderful and a horrible thing is committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the people love to have it so." Do we not find, not the proper fulfilment, but an illustration of the truth of this verse, in the present feelings of the Jewish nation, as well as in what is past, or what may be yet to come? The special case of misplaced trust which is condemned, is that of trust in Egypt; and it is a fact that some, at least, of the most influential of that people did recently look, if they are not yet looking, to that quarter for their restoration to their country. And with apparent reason at the time when it was under the rule of Egypt and her late energetic leader. And did a faithful seer remind



them of what Isaiah has written before them in a tablet and recorded in a book, that "the Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose," what reply might be expected but this, "Prophecy not unto us right things; speak unto us smooth things; cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us?"

12-17. *Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, Because ye despise this word, and trust in oppression (or, fraud) and perverseness, and stay thereon: therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant. And he shall break it as the breaking of the potter's vessel (or, the bottle of potters) that is broken in pieces; he shall not spare: so that there shall not be found in the bursting of it a sherd to take fire from the hearth, or to take water withal out of the pit. For thus saith the Lord God (or, Adonai Jehovah), the Holy One of Israel, In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength; and ye would not. But ye said, No; for we will flee upon horses; therefore shall ye flee: and, We will ride upon the swift; therefore shall they that pursue you be swift. One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one; at the rebuke of five shall ye flee; till ye be left as a beacon (or, a tree bereft of branches, or, boughs; or, a mast) upon the top of a mountain, and as an ensign on an hill.*

Here there is foretold what seems to be the destruction of that power on which the nation is said to trust, and their own punishment for their sin in trusting in it. For their contempt of the word of the Lord, (equivalent to the law of the Lord of verse 9,) and their dependence on their own oppression and perverseness, "their iniquity would be to them as a breach ready to fall" The meaning, however, is not evidently that their iniquity would so fall and be broken in pieces. The iniquity referred to is the confidence of the Jews in Egypt, a confidence which would be destroyed by the destruction of the object of it; and it is its fall which seems here described under the comparison of a wall first bulging out, and then falling in pieces, so that not so much as a shred or fragment of it is left. Such is not now the state of Egypt—such it has never yet been; but in keeping with this, and referring to a

future time, it is written, that when Jerusalem shall be holy, and the mountains shall drop down new wine, "Egypt shall be a desolation," Joel iii. 19 ; and similarly, "The sceptre of Egypt shall depart away," Zech. x. 8. On this account, it may be supposed, shall the Jews be "ashamed of Egypt their glory."—The word "oppression" has occasioned difficulty. According to the view given of the context, it seems to imply that this will be a characteristic of the Jewish nation after their return, previous to their final judgments and purifying.—But although the confidence of the Jews in Egypt is described as misplaced and disappointed, she does not go astray unwarned : she is taught, that in turning to God and confiding in him, she would have security (15),—the effect of righteousness is quietness and assurance ; but she would not—she would place her confidence not in God, but in horses<sup>1</sup> (16). The same charge is brought against the nation in the following chapter, verse 1 : "Wo to them that go down to Egypt for help, and stay on horses and trust in chariots, because they are many, and in horsemen, because they are very strong." But in this they shall not find safety. To counteract their swiftness, they that pursue them shall be swift. Similar language, in apparent allusion to the same events, occurs in Amos ii. 14-16 : "The flight shall perish from the swift, neither shall the mighty deliver himself : he that is swift of foot shall not deliver himself : neither shall he that rideth the horse deliver himself : and he that is courageous among the mighty shall flee away in that day, saith the Lord." So fatal will be the consequences of trusting to an arm of flesh, that "a thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one"<sup>2</sup> (17). This, from the

<sup>1</sup> The term "flee," in the first instance, cannot here be used in the sense of flight from an enemy, its proper signification. It appears to denote only swiftness.

<sup>2</sup> When their trust will be reversed, and it shall be put in the Lord, their experience will also be reversed, "Then one shall chase a thousand (of their enemies), and two put ten thousand to flight."

severity of their judgments, and from what is said in the following verses, of the subsequent prosperity of the nation, must refer to their final trials, when "two-thirds shall be cut off and die,"—to the time when there will be left "in the midst of her an afflicted and poor people." Their trials then will continue until they shall be left as a beacon (literally the mast of a ship, a pole) on the top of a mountain, implying how greatly they will be reduced, so as to be a spectacle that will attract general attention.

18-22. *And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you ; and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you ; for the Lord is a God of judgment : blessed are all they that wait for him. For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem : thou shalt weep no more : he will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry ; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee. And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction (or, oppression), yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers : And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left. Ye shall defile also the covering of thy graven images of silver (or, the graven images of thy silver), and the ornament of thy molten images of gold : thou shalt cast (or, scatter) them away as a menstruous cloth ; thou shalt say unto it, Get thee hence.*

These verses foretell the coming prosperity of the people, when the cloud of her troubles shall have cleared away. God will wait long, see xviii. 4 ; but only to be gracious to her. Her sins require that he should wait. In her affliction he is exalted or magnified as the God of judgment, that, when she is refined thereby, he may have mercy upon her : "I will go and return to my place till they acknowledge their offence : in their affliction they shall seek me early." The final possession of Judea by the nation will follow (19). A feature of the return intended, that "they shall weep no more," is applicable only to the period of Christ's reign on earth, when "he will wipe away tears from off all faces, and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth." His

judgments will be continued in Judah until they cry unto him; but when they do cry, his answer will be quick and very gracious: "It shall come to pass, that before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear," lxxv. 24; "I will refine them as silver is refined: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God," Zech. xiii. 9. As evil leaders and false teachers are often represented as among the greatest of the nation's curses; so, when finally restored, and when their judgments shall be past, among their greatest blessings will be that of faithful teachers (20), who will be removed from them no more. That is ascribed to their instrumentality (21), which in other places God himself is said to do for Judah. Thus "the Lord shall guide thee continually," lviii. 4; "He that hath mercy on them will lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them," xlix. 10. The declaration, that God will not remove their teachers any more, implies that they would be removed. This has been the case, generally, in the ceasing from among them of such guides as they were blessed with before their curses came upon them—as Moses, and David, and Solomon—men, whether as teachers or as rulers, such as no other nation has ever had. "The prophets, where are they?" A more particular fulfilment of the prediction implied in the passage, occurred when Russia, in a ukase still existing, ordered the removal of the teachers of the Jews to Lithuania, the only instance known in which this has been so literally done. A characteristic of the nation when they shall be turned to the Lord, is their treatment of idols (22), which they are said to defile, and cast away with loathing. The expression to "defile," refers to a custom practised in ancient times among the Jews, mentioned in 2 Kings xxiii., where Josiah, when engaged in uprooting idolatry from the land, is said to have defiled the high places, where the priests had burnt



incense unto Baal—to have polluted the altar made by Jeroboam, although in what particular way that was done is not stated. The covering of the graven images refers to the circumstance that the idols were often, or usually, made of wood or clay, and only overlaid with one or other of the precious metals. It is then that the nation shall say, “We shall not say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods;” and “What have I to do any more with idols?”

23-25. *Then shall he give the rain of thy seed, that thou shalt sow the ground withal; and bread of the increase of the earth, and it shall be fat and plenteous: in that day shall thy cattle feed in large pastures. The oxen likewise, and the young asses that ear the ground, shall eat clean (or, savoury, or, leavened) provender, which hath been winnowed with the shovel and with the fan. And there shall be upon every high mountain, and upon every high (or, lifted up) hill, rivers and streams of waters in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall.*

Another blessing promised in these days is the restored fertility and prosperity of the land, indicated by the gift of seasonable showers (23), the abundance of bread, the extensive pasturage of cattle, the rich and carefully prepared food of the beasts of burden (24), and the number of the rivers and streams (25).—The expression, “rain of thy seed,” signifies rain for the seed which is sown.—“Ear” is an old English word, which is now obsolete, meaning to cultivate. It occurs in other places, as in Gen. xlv. 6, where it denotes seed-time.—Clean or (margin) leavened, or fermented provender, is supposed to denote a mixture of various grains; an index of plenty in a land where at present they cannot be got, but in small quantity, for human food. In each of the particulars introduced in the prophecy there is an obvious contrast between the present condition of the land and what is foretold here. The blessings which it is said it will possess are just those which it is specially without. The future fertility of Judea when the nation shall finally be settled in it, is often the subject of prediction, just as its past and present

desolation is, see iv. 2: "The seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things," Zech. viii. 12; "In the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert: and the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water," xxxv. 6, 7. The change which the land will then experience is not more wonderful than that which it has already experienced. The change from what it was to what it is, from its past fertility to its present desolation, does not betoken a more signal interference of the divine hand, than that from what it is to what it shall be—from its present desolation to its promised fertility. The time of it is marked. It is to be when "the day of the great slaughter" (23), "the terrible day of the Lord," is over; as if the land of Judah were to be fertilized first by the blood of her enemies and oppressors.

26. *Moreover, the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound.*

The import of this verse is doubtful. As it denotes a change inconceivable by man, it may represent blessings inconceivable by him here, in that state in which things that it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive are prepared. Is there not, however, some relation between the turning the sun into darkness and the moon into blood before the terrible day of the Lord, and their increased brightness when that day is over? If the blackness of the sun and the redness of the moon are to be literal, may not also the other?

27-33. *Behold, the name of the Lord cometh from far, burning with his anger, and the burden (or, the grievousness of flame) thereof is heavy (or, heaviness); his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire: And his breath, as an overflowing stream, shall reach to the midst of the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of*

*vanity: and there shall be a bridle in the jaws of the people, causing them to err. Ye shall have a song, as in the night, when a holy solemnity is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come into the mountain of the Lord, to the mighty one (or, Rock) of Israel. And the Lord shall cause his glorious voice (or, glory of his voice) to be heard, and shall shew the lightning down of his arm, with the indignation of his anger, and with the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering, and tempest, and hailstones. For through the voice of the Lord shall the Assyrian be beaten down, which smote with a rod. And in every place where the grounded staff shall pass (or, every passing of the rod founded), which the Lord shall lay (or, cause to rest) upon him, it shall be with tabrets and harps: and in battles of shaking will he fight with it (or against them). For Tophet is ordained of old (or, from yesterday),; yea, for the king it is prepared: he hath made it deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.*

The prophecy concludes with a detailed representation of what is before just alluded to, viz., the terribleness of the divine judgments upon the enemies of the Lord, when the year of his redeemed shall be come. The figure of fire is first employed to represent his vengeance, expressions nearly synonymous being heaped on each other to give intensity to the comparison, according to the Hebrew idiom. The same language is often applied to the same subject: "Behold the Lord will come with fire—to render his rebuke with flames of fire, for by fire and by his sword shall the Lord plead with all flesh," lxvi. 15, 16; "The whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy," Neh. i. 18. There may be here, however, a blending of the literal with the metaphorical; for example, lightning is represented as one of the instruments of divine vengeance in the day of national punishment for national sin, and this may not inaptly be said to proceed from the lips—the tongue of God. The clause, "the burden thereof," is rendered by Lowth, "the flame rageth violently" (margin); by Alexander, "and heavy the ascent of smoke," the allusion, from the derivation, seeming to be to the volume of smoke and flame which ascends from a conflagration. In the following verse (28), the

same subject is continued and illustrated by three figures : by that of an overflowing river reaching to the middle of the neck, see viii. 8, implying that the general body of the enemies of God would be overwhelmed by his judgments, that comparatively few would escape in the tribulation of the last days ; by that of a sieve, a sieve of vanity and emptiness, implying that so complete would be their dispersion and overthrow, they would be tossed and agitated by the divine judgments like grain in a sieve ; and by that of a bridle, implying that the Almighty would control them for his own ends, and a bridle causing to err, because he would lead them to destruction. The same figure is applied to the removal of Sennacherib from Jerusalem, xxxvii. 29. And also, exactly as in the text, to the overthrow of the nations that shall be gathered at last against it, Ezek. xxxviii. But while this shall be the portion of those who have spoiled and robbed Judah, her deliverance will be accomplished ; sorrow and sighing will flee away and give place to mirth (29). The succeeding verse (30) is an amplification of the 27th, with this addition, that the power of the elements is represented as being wielded by the Lord against his enemies, xxviii. 17. That some miraculous manifestation of divine power is intended by the voice of God—by his tongue being as a devouring fire—is evident from the clause, “ he shall cause his glorious voice to be heard.” Judgments of an ordinary character would not produce this effect. By this miraculous voice, the use of fire and brimstone, &c., the Assyrian will be beaten down (31). What is described elsewhere as the northern army seems here intended by Assyria, which lies north of Judea. The same thing is often foretold in connexion, as here, with the final redemption of Judah : “ When the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and in Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the King of Assyria,” x. 12 ; “ I will break the



Assyrian in my land, and in my mountain tread him under foot," xiv. 25. But Assyria will not be punished until she shall have been made the instrument of punishing Judah—until she shall have smitten her with a rod, see vii. 18. From the ambiguity of the original here, it is doubtful who is the subject of the verb, and different views of the passage have been taken accordingly. By some the last clause of the 31st verse is understood to describe God smiting Assyria, this subject being continued in the following verse. The meaning then is, that every occasion of God's punishing Assyria—laying the rod on them—would be received with joy by those whom they had oppressed, viz., the Jews. The following verse appears to describe the same as the 29th, viz., the joy of Judea after their troubles are over, wherever the appointed staff or rod (Assyria) shall pass. While the Jews are rejoicing with tabret and harp, after their calamities are at an end, the Lord will fight against their enemy (Assyria) in agitating and disastrous battles.<sup>1</sup> The site of the great, and ultimate, and ordained (appointed) destruction of Assyria, is foretold last of all (33), viz., Tophet. This was a place in the valley of Hinnom, 2 Kings xxiii. 10; but it is used in Scripture to express the whole valley. Besides, in 2 Kings it occurs in three places, always in connexion with great judgments. In two of these, Jer. vii. 31, and xix. 6, Tophet is connected with past judgments of the Jews themselves in their city, as at the siege by Titus. In the text, the third instance in which it occurs, it is limited by the context to future events, and not as in the other cases, to the judgments of the Jews, but of their enemies. That in this instance it refers to the future is confirmed by what is said in Joel of the scene of the same events, the last and terrible destruction of the enemies of God: "Behold in those days and at

<sup>1</sup> "Grounded" from נָסַח, 1. to lay the foundation; 2. to establish, appoint.

that time—the great day of the Lord—when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there.” This valley is united with that of Hinnom, in which Tophet is situated. There, as on a vast funeral pile—as in a grave deep and large—shall the enemies of Judah perish.

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## CHAPTER XXXI.

THIS chapter is very much an epitome of the preceding. Its subject also is the confidence of Judah in Egypt, against which it warns, and the consequences of which it foretells. Its full accomplishment is to be sought in events still future. But while this and other passages are so regarded, it is not to be supposed that they should have no reference to intermediate events. The predictions may be applicable to such events; there may be many coincidences between them; the same lesson would be taught;—for example, in the instance of trusting to Egypt, the warning would be the same in every case in which this sin should be committed; while, at the same time, the whole scope and context of this passage prove that its great bearing is on occurrences still to come. There may be many illustrations of the truth of a prophecy, while there is only one great fulfilment of it in which all its parts have their intended accomplishment.

1-3. *Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help, and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong: but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord! Yet he also is wise, and will bring evil, and will not call back (or, remove) his words: but will arise against the house of the evil-doers, and against the help of them*

*that work iniquity. Now the Egyptians are men, and not God ; and their horses flesh, and not spirit. When the Lord shall stretch out his hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is holpen shall fall down, and they all shall fail together.*

The threat contained in the beginning of the prophecy is precisely the same as that contained in the second and sixteenth verses of the previous chapter. It is a warning against putting confidence in Egypt as an ally, a circumstance which implied unbelief and distrust of the God of Israel. The first clause, or clauses, of the following verse, appear to be uttered ironically: "He also is wise!" The Jews might substitute Egypt for God, yet He, too, might have been consulted and looked to! He perhaps would be found not unworthy of their confidence! Evil he could and would cause, and his threatenings he would execute to the uttermost, which is the idea implied by the expression, "his words would he not call back." The folly of preferring the friendship of Egypt to that of God is then forcibly exposed (3), and the downfall of helper and helped together foretold. There is no record of any literal fulfilment of this in time past—of any alliance between Egypt and Judea being followed by the sudden fall of both together, as seems implied here.

4, 5. *For thus hath the Lord spoken unto me, Like as the lion and the young lion roaring on his prey, when a multitude of shepherds is called forth against him, he will not be afraid of their voice, nor abase himself for the noise of them (or multitude): so shall the Lord of hosts come down to fight for mount Zion, and for the hill thereof. As birds flying, so will the Lord of hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also he will deliver it; and passing over he will preserve it.*

The figurative description of protection extended to the Jews, must be regarded as taking place after the judgments of the nation are over. Like a lion defending its prey, undisturbed by the shoutings of those who hasten to rescue it from its grasp, or as birds hovering around their young or flying to their aid, so would the Lord fight for mount Zion. It is in reference to the same

period that it is written in Zech., "The Lord of hosts shall defend them. The Lord their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people," ix. 15, 16; "In that day I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem," xii. 9; "Then shall the Lord go forth and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle," xiv. 3.

6, 7. *Turn ye unto him from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted. For in that day every man shall cast away his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which your own hands have made unto you for a sin.*

With such a recommendation as his care for Jerusalem to enforce it, the nation is urged to turn unto the Lord. Their feelings are appealed to. He to whom they are invited to return, is the God against whom they had deeply revolted. In the day when they shall do this their sincerity will be manifested by the throwing away of their costly idols. They shall cast them to the moles and to the bats: "In that day the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more again stay upon him that smote them, but shall stay upon the Lord. The remnant shall return unto the mighty God," x. 20, 21.

8, 9. *Then shall the Assyrian fall with the sword, not of a mighty man; and the sword, not of a mean man, shall devour him: but he shall flee from (or, for fear of) the sword, and his young men shall be discomfited (or, tributary). And he shall pass over to his strong hold (or, strength) for fear, (or, his rock shall pass away for fear), and his princes shall be afraid of the ensign, saith the Lord, whose fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem.*

The fate of the enemies of the children of Israel is here foretold. Not only shall Egypt fall, as declared in the previous chapter, but also the Assyrian—having served his purpose as the Lord's instrument and rod—shall perish: "Asshur (Assyria) is there and all her company: his graves are about him: all of them slain, fallen by the sword," Ezek. xxxii. 22. It will not, however, be by the sword of man, but at least in a great degree by some



miraculous manifestation of divine power and anger. This is described in a previous chapter, not negatively as here, but positively. In regard to the same hostile nations it is written, "The multitude of thy strangers shall be like small dust, as chaff that passeth away; yea, it shall be at an instant suddenly. Thou shalt be visited of the Lord of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and with great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire," xxix. 5, 6. These supernatural agents may be intended by the sword of the Lord, when it is said that "by fire and by sword shall the Lord plead with all flesh."—It will be the sword not of "a mighty man" or of "a mean man." It is questionable how far the authorized version here is warranted by the original. Lowth translates, "The Assyrian shall fall by a sword not of man; yea, a sword not of mortal shall devour him." There will, however, be also the employment of human agency: "Every man's hand shall be against his brother," Ezek. xxxviii. 21; but it is the supernatural means which God will use, which appear to be here intended. The destruction of Sennacherib's host may be regarded as a symbol of the manner in which the sword not of a mighty man shall devour. As of old, Israel will "stand still and see the salvation of God:" "For fear of thee shall they flee."—The adoption of the marginal reading in the concluding verse seems necessary in order to make the passage intelligible: "His rock (or strength) shall pass away for fear."—The nature of the ensign or standard which is to excite their alarm, and which will be erected on Zion, is not specified, see v. 26; Christ himself is called the ensign: "The root of Jesse shall stand for an ensign of the people;" and of him his enemies shall that day be afraid. It is then that they "shall call on the mountains to cover them from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of his wrath is come." The last clause, "his fire in

Zion and his furnace in Jerusalem," refers to the fact that it is there that by fire the Lord shall plead with all flesh, when he will come with the fire of a devouring flame. It is equivalent with the last clause of the previous chapter which makes Tophet, beside Jerusalem, the scene of the outpouring of the vial of divine wrath.

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## CHAPTER XXXII.

THIS chapter is a continuation of the former, from which it is needlessly disjoined. It represents, at considerable length, the blessings which shall distinguish the reign of Christ on earth subsequently to the judgments previously described, but has inserted in it (verse 9) a moving appeal to the Jewish nation, founded upon the troubles through which they must pass. Besides the claim of the context, that Christ be understood as the subject of the first verses, and not Hezekiah, or any other good king of Judah, the particulars of the description itself require the adoption of this view. The religious state of the nation and the excellence of the blessings enumerated, accord exactly in style and spirit and matter with what is often predicted of the state of things under the Messiah's reign, and are certainly exaggerations of the condition of the people or of the land in the times of Hezekiah. There is an evident contrast in the first part of the chapter between the state of the nation as represented here, and what is said of it in the foregoing chapters.

1. *Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment.*

The passage opens with the expression "behold," im-

plying that some remarkable announcement—one worthy of attention—followed. Many other predictions point to Christ as here intended by “the king who shall reign in righteousness:” “Behold, the days come, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our righteousness,” Jer. xxiii. 5, 6. Unlike former princes under whose oppression they have long groaned—who are described as being “companions of thieves, who loved gifts and followed after rewards,” i. 23, the princes of Judah,—of which people it is said when speaking of the Messiah’s reign, “Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth,” Ps. xlv. 10,—these princes shall rule in judgment or equity: Christ shall reign, they under him shall rule.

2. *And a man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great (or, heavy) rock in a weary land.*

By “a man” in this verse, Christ seems to be intended. The comparisons employed are as significant as they are familiar;—shelter from the winds of the desert and the suffocating clouds of sand which they carry with them—water to quench the pangs of thirst, and shade from the scorplings of an eastern sun, are employed to represent the blessings which the reign of Christ will bring to man, in a country which is now a dry place and a weary land. If the expression “a man” be understood generally of an inhabitant, the contrast is between what will be the character of the population in those days, and what it has been previously, when every man’s hand has been against another, and no security has existed in the land.

3-8. *And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken. The heart also of the rash (or, hasty)*

*shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly (or, elegantly). The vile person shall be no more called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful. For the vile person will speak villany, and his heart will work iniquity, to practise hypocrisy, and to utter error against the Lord, to make empty the soul of the hungry ; and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail. The instruments also of the churl are evil : he deviseth wicked devices to destroy the poor with lying words, even when the needy speaketh right (or, when he speaketh against the poor in judgment). But the liberal deviseth liberal things ; and by liberal things shall he stand (or, be established).*

In contrast with the previous state of ignorance and perverseness when the vision is to them, as it has now been so long, as a sealed book, and they do not hear the word of the Lord,—in the day when the king shall reign in righteousness, the eyes of men shall not be dim, and their ears shall hear: “They shall see eye to eye when the Lord shall bring again Zion,” lii. 8. This will be the case even with those most unlikely to acquire knowledge, or to receive instruction (4). One result of their understanding spiritual things will be, that the present state of matters, in which many have imputed to them virtues, and acquire a character to which they have no claim, will come to an end (5). This passage may be regarded as denoting a radical change in the usages of society. Not only among Jews, but also among professing Christians, how common to laud an individual for what, after all, for his means, may be a very pitiful alms, without regard to a character otherwise deserving of all censure ;—how often is a person, in other respects vile, for his charities called liberal. In the following verse (6), the prophet defines the epithets he had employed. The vile person, literally fool, is one who sins against God in speech, in heart, in profession, in life, and also neglects his duty towards his fellow-creatures ; and yet such an individual is often found to receive the applause of men. The churl, or niggardly person, is one (7) who seeks wealth by unlawful means, making the poor especially the victims of his rapacity ;



and such a person, if he happen to be benevolent, every thing vicious about him being overlooked, is by the world pronounced bountiful. In the most obvious, although not in the Scriptural signification of the phrase, charity, with the world, covers a multitude of sins. But this, which may be regarded as forming here a specimen of the unhealthy state of society, will cease when the King shall reign in righteousness. But, while the sinner shall be no more called bountiful, the truly liberal man shall stand, that is, shall be established or continue (margin). With the measure that he metes shall it be measured to him again.

9-14. *Rise up, ye women that are at ease ; hear my voice, ye careless daughters ; give ear unto my speech. Many days and years (or, days above a year) shall ye be troubled, ye careless women : for the vintage shall fail, the gathering shall not come. Tremble, ye women that are at ease ; be troubled, ye careless ones : strip you, and make you bare, and gird sackcloth upon your loins. They shall lament for the teats, for the pleasant fields (or, the fields of desire), for the fruitful vine. Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers ; yea (or, burning), upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city : because the palaces shall be forsaken ; the multitude of the city shall be left ; the forts and towers (or, clefts and watch-towers) shall be for dens for ever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks.*

This division of the chapter describes the judgments that the people and the land of Judea will be subjected to before the happy state of things just described will be brought about. The warning with which it commences is addressed to the women of the nation, perhaps because they shared most largely in its guilt, see iii. 16, or more probably because they would have the most bitter experience of its judgments. So our Lord addressed them particularly in language of warning and compassion,—“Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.” The prophet, introducing first the cause of their coming woes, rebukes their abandonment to pleasure (9), and their carelessness of danger. He warns them of many days of approaching calamity,

when the vintage and the harvest—two seasons of particular rejoicing—would cease (10). He calls on them to realize the danger of their position (11), to lay aside their gay apparel, and assume the emblems of deep mourning. He foretells that they would yet lament the desolation of their fields and vineyards (12); and that, where these had been, and even in Jerusalem itself, the joyous city, there would be briars and thorns (13), see vii. 23, forsaken palaces, and an empty city, and fortified places tenanted by wild beasts and cattle (11). The whole description applies at the present day to the Arabs and other inhabitants. The vintage has failed among them—they lament for the pleasant fields.—In regard to the last of these particulars, Volney wrote, “Every step we meet with ruins of towers, dungeons, and castles, with fosses, frequently inhabited by jackals, owls, and scorpions.” And in the present day, according to the testimony of every traveller, hyenas, wild boars, foxes, wolves, jackals, and other wild animals, abound in the land. The prediction of the land becoming a pasture of flocks has been also long realized. The usual occupation of the Arab tribes is the keeping of flocks.—“They shall lament for the teats” is literally “mourning for the breasts.” The precise meaning of the Hebrew it is difficult to determine. The original never bears the signification of teats of cattle. Some understand the clause to express striking upon the breasts, according to the Septuagint and Vulgate.<sup>1</sup> Others use the expression breasts, by which life is nourished, as the symbol of fruitful fields, in conformity with the poetical use of the corresponding Greek noun. The prediction of these judgments is not to be limited to any particular occasion. They describe what was to befall Judea from their commencement to their close, when the Spirit should be poured out from on high. It is well known how these prophecies present a picture of what Judea is now, and

<sup>1</sup> In the former the verb is *κνιπω*, in the latter *plango*.

has been for many ages, although it may receive a still darker colouring from the judgments which are progressing in the land, or may yet await it.

15. *Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest.*

This verse points out the time when the desolations of the land shall finally cease, viz., when the Spirit shall be poured out from on high. That this can refer to no past period, is evident from the circumstance that the desolation of the land has not yet ceased, and it is to continue until the outpouring of the Spirit, but no longer. The period referred to is undoubtedly that of the ultimate and universal establishment of Christ's kingdom on earth, for righteousness, peace, and security are said to follow. This final outpouring of the Spirit, of which foretastes and first-fruits have been experienced from time to time in the Church of Christ on earth, the most marked of these being that on the day of Pentecost, is often predicted in connexion with the reign of Christ on mount Zion, and the conversion of all men to his service. Thus, in Ezek. xxxix. 29, in connexion with the last judgments that are to come upon the earth, and the conversion of Israel, it is written, "Neither will I hide my face any more from them, for I have poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel." In Joel ii. 28, this promise occurs in the same connexion, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,—and I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth;—in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance." In Zech. xii. 9, it is written to the same effect, "I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of supplication, and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced." The pouring out of the Spirit upon the nation is of course synonymous with their con-

version to God, and that will be marked by the return of prosperity to the land, so that the wilderness shall become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall become, in richness and increase, as a forest. This renewed fertility of the land is often connected with the conversion of the people. In the day when Jerusalem shall be holy, "the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow down with milk," Joel iii. 18.

16-20. *Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places, when it shall hail, coming down on the forest; and the city shall be low in a low place (or, the city shall be utterly abased). Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass.*

The effect of the Spirit's outpouring will be judgment (justice) and righteousness (16), and the effect of righteousness, peace and assurance (security) for ever (17): "He (Christ) shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law," xlii. 4; "Thy people also shall be all righteous," lx. 21. There shall also be peace and security as well as righteousness: God "will make with them a covenant of peace; it shall be an everlasting covenant," Ezek. xxxvii. 26. In "righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near," liv. 14. The same idea is repeated in the 18th verse, and contrasted with the troubled condition of their enemies (19). The hail of God's vengeance shall then come down on the forest, a term which is figurative of an enemy, as in x. 10, and the city shall be utterly abased. Whether any particular city, conspicuous in its hostility to Israel, is here intended, or whether the whole clause represents generally the enemies of the nation, can be known only by the issue. The same connexion of events may be often observed. Thus, in



xxv. 4, &c., there is first seen the righteousness and security of Judah—"the Lord is their strength and refuge;" next, the judgment of her enemies—then "the terrible ones" are "brought low;" and lastly, the conversion of all flesh—"he shall destroy the veil that is spread over all nations." The fertility of the land and the security of the people are represented in the last verse: where before drought and barrenness prevailed, there will be sowing beside all waters, and the beasts of burden will supplant the beasts of prey. There has been supposed an allusion here to a practice of sowing grain said to prevail in certain circumstances in the east, by casting the seed upon the waters when the river overflows its banks, and, when it subsides, employing oxen and asses to trample it in the mud.—The preposition rendered "beside" signifies also "upon." The chief idea, however, in the passage, is the contrast between the universal fertility and security of the land in the days of righteousness, and what it has been while judgment-stricken.

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## CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE subjects of this chapter are very similar to those of the preceding. The blissfulness of Judah's condition in the time of universal righteousness is still farther enlarged upon.

1. *Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee! when thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled; and when thou shalt make an end to deal treacherously, they shall deal treacherously with thee.*

As in previous instances, a particular and conspicuous enemy of Judah, representing, it may be, however, her enemies generally, is introduced, and his doom foretold.

This enemy is represented as having for a time spoiled, and dealt treacherously with the nation with impunity ; but an end, it is foretold, would be put to this,—he would cease to spoil, and would be spoiled. Many of the nations that have successively spoiled and oppressed Israel, have in their turn been spoiled, as Babylon, Rome, &c. ; and the same fate awaits all her oppressors : “ All that devour thee shall be devoured ; all that prey upon thee will I give for a prey,” Jer. xxx. 16.

2-6. *O Lord, be gracious unto us ; we have waited for thee : be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble. At the noise of the tumult the people fled ; at the lifting up of thyself the nations were scattered. And your spoil shall be gathered like the gathering of the caterpillar ; as the running to and fro of locusts shall he run upon them. The Lord is exalted ; for he dwelleth on high : he hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness. And wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation (or, salvations) : the fear of the Lord is his treasure.*

A song of thanksgiving and praise is represented in these verses as being offered by the Jewish nation. It embraces similar matter to those already noticed, see xii. It opens almost in the same words with others of them. The long expectation of the nation—we have waited for thee—is expressed in a parallel song : “ It shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us.” Of the change of person in the middle of this verse from the second to the third—“ be thou *their* arm,” Barnes says, “ Isaiah here interposes his own feelings as a Jew, and offers his own prayer, that God would be the arm (strength) of the nation.” The form, however, is immediately changed, and he presents the prayer of the people. “ Be thou their arm (strength) every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble,” is in another song, “ The Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song ; he also is become my salvation.” The song then alludes to the flight and destruction of their enemies (3). Of the same thing it is written in similar songs, “ Sing

unto the Lord, for he hath done excellent things ;" " I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath done wonderful things ; he bringeth down them that dwell on high." The noise of the tumult, and lifting up of himself by the Lord, refer to the instruments and manifestation of his vengeance against his enemies, called elsewhere " his glorious voice," " the indignation of his anger," xxx. 27. The 4th verse has more the appearance of a direct prophecy interposed by Isaiah ; but it may also be considered as put into the lips of the Jewish nation, and the continuity of the song be thus preserved. It describes the spoil of their enemies falling into the hands of the Jews. Assyria is represented as comparing Israel to a nest full of riches, which she robs, x. 14 ; and here this, and all the spoil which their enemies may have gathered, is said to be recovered, when they (the Jews) shall spoil those that spoiled them : " In that day a great tumult from the Lord shall be among them : and Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem ; and the wealth of all the heathen round about shall be gathered together, gold, and silver, and apparel, in great abundance," Zech. xiv. 14. The devastation wrought by the Jews on their enemies is expressed by a figure drawn from the habits of the caterpillar and locust, very significant in a country where the ravages of these creatures are as familiar as they are terrible. The one allusion may denote the completeness of the spoiling, the other its rapidity. The appearance of the locust running to and fro is represented by travellers as very peculiar ; the rapidity and intricacy of their movements producing the impression that they must constantly come in collision with each other, which, however, they avoid. The song then proclaims (5) the exaltation of the Lord, and his filling Zion, the place of his dwelling, with righteousness. It is to this time that the psalmist evidently refers, for it is in connexion with his uttering his voice against the heathen, when he writes, " God is in the midst of her (his

ancient and now converted people): the heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved; he uttered his voice, the earth melted. Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath wrought in the earth: he makes wars to cease. Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth," Ps. xlv. As to the righteousness of Zion, then, it is said, "Ye shall know that I am the Lord your God, dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy," Joel iii. 17. Various characteristics of that period, the times of the Lord when his name shall be exalted and his will done, are then specified,—wisdom, knowledge, a mighty salvation, and that fear of the Lord which is his treasure, (that is, which he prizes so highly in his creatures,) shall be the stability (that is, the firm foundation) of his throne and kingdom: "Then the eyes of them that see shall not be dim;" "They shall see eye to eye;" "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord." Henderson gives the following, perhaps preferable, construction in this passage: "He, that is, the Lord, the Messiah, also shall be the stability of the time, a store of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge." Then the idea is, not that wisdom, knowledge, &c., will be the stability or strength of the Messiah's kingdom, but that he himself will be the wisdom, &c., of his people. Both views are equally consistent with truth.—"Strength of salvation" is equivalent to saving strength.

7-9. *Behold, their valiant ones (or, messengers) shall cry without; the ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly. The highways lie waste, the wayfaring man ceaseth; he hath broken the covenant, he hath despised the cities, he regardeth no man. The earth mourneth and languisheth; Lebanon is ashamed and hewn down (or, withered away); Sharon is like a wilderness; and Bashan and Carmel shake off their fruits.*

These verses describe the coming judgments of the land immediately before the rising of the Lord to punish his enemies. It may be easy to apply them to some of the



past calamities of Judea, as the invasion by Sennacherib ; and did they form a detached passage, the explanation might perhaps be accepted ; but surrounded as they are by much that can receive a natural exposition only by applying it to future events, they also must be understood prospectively, in keeping with the prophecy of which they form part. The sorrow of the valiant men, the ambassadors of peace, may be understood as caused by fruitless negotiations, on the part of the Jews, with the nations which are yet to be gathered against Jerusalem. The desolation depicted in the following verse, although it has been in a great measure realized already, may yet have the finishing stroke applied to it when invaded by these nations ; and all that is here said of the covenant being broken, may be fulfilled by that hostile power. The desolation of the land, and even of the richest and most fertile parts of Syria, which alone are enumerated here (9)—a circumstance which confirms the supposition that the full fulfilment is yet to come, these districts being still exceptions in some measure to the utter barrenness of the land—may be increased and completed to the extent determined, by that enemy. Their desolation, that of Lebanon, for example, may not have reached the degree predicted ; the intestine troubles of which it was of late the seat, reduced greatly the population of that region, and added to its barrenness. But at the time referred to in the prophecy, the vial of judgment will be exhausted.

10-12. *Now will I rise, saith the Lord ; now will I be exalted ; now will I lift up myself. Ye shall conceive chaff ; ye shall bring forth stubble : your breath, as fire, shall devour you. And the people shall be as the burnings of lime ; as thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire.*

The period of time is now reached in the prediction when the last enemies of Israel having done their part, and the desolation of the land being completed, there shall be that lifting up of himself by the Lord, whereby

his enemies shall be scattered (3) : “ *Now* will I rise, *now* will I be exalted, *now* will I lift up myself.” The purpose of his rising up is then unfolded ; it will be to judgment. The same order of events is observable elsewhere. See vi. 11, where also the question of the duration of Israel’s judgments is answered. The utter futility of the attempts made by the enemies of the Jews to destroy them is then described (11). The same idea seems contained here as in viii. 9 : “ Associate yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces ; take counsel together, and it shall come to nought.” The fierce fury of these adversaries of Judah will be the cause of their own destruction—the flames heated for others will devour themselves, and they shall perish like burning lime or dried thorns (12). The same or equivalent figures are often employed to express the final overthrow of the enemies of God and of his people, “ Who would set the briers and thorns before me in battle ? I would go through them, I would consume them together,” xxvii. 4.

13. *Hear, ye that are far off, what I have done ; and, ye that are near, acknowledge my might.*

Of such a character will these judgments be, that they will arrest the attention and command the acknowledgment of all flesh, near and remote. So it is written of the same events : “ Sing unto the Lord, for he hath done excellent things ; this is known in all the earth,” xii. 5. The same invitation is addressed in the following chapter : “ Come near, ye nations, to hear ; and hearken, ye people : let the earth hear, and all that is therein ; for the indignation of the Lord is upon all armies,” xxxiv. 1 ; “ Listen, O isles, unto me ; and hearken, ye people, from far : the Lord hath made my mouth like a sharp sword,” xlix. 1.

14. *The sinners in Zion are afraid ; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites : who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire ? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings ?*

The final judgments of the enemies of God are here foretold, followed by a description, in the remainder of the chapter, of the prosperity of his people. Dismay will overwhelm the former in that day when the Lord shall plead with them by fire and sword—when his arm shall light on them, and he shall visit them with indignation, with a devouring fire, with scattering, and tempest, and hailstones. And anticipating from what they see of the terribleness of the Divine judgments on that great day, the yet more terrible character of those prepared for them in the world to come, in the place which is

“ The endless home of unbelievers,  
Where there is everlasting wail and wo,  
Gnashing of teeth, and tears of blood, and fire  
Eternal, and the worm which dieth not ;”

—or rather, when the veil that now conceals that condition is withdrawn, for when the Lord judges the quick (the nations of the earth), he judges also the dead,—they cry, “ Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire ?” So it is written, “ The Lord shall come in a day when the servant looketh not for him, and in an hour when he is not aware—(fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites)—and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites,” Matt. xxiv. 50. It is then that the beast and the false prophet are cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone, and the remnant are slain with the sword of Him who is called Faithful and True, Rev. xix. 20, 21. The reference to the future punishment of the wicked in this connexion confirms the view given in xxv. 8, that the resurrection and judgment, both of the just and unjust, take place at the commencement of what is called the millennial reign. If the resurrection and punishment of the wicked were to occur at its end, the allusion to their doom here would be out of place. So in lxvi. 24.

15-17. *He that walketh righteously (or, in righteousness), and speak-*

*eth uprightly (or, uprightnesses); he that despiseth the gain of oppressions (or, deceits), that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood (or, bloods), and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; he shall dwell on high (or, heights, or, high places); his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks; bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure. Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty; they shall behold the land that is very far off (or, the land of far distances).*

In the following account of the prosperity of his people during the Messiah's reign—the resurrection saints, the children of the resurrection, living and reigning spiritually with Christ—their character is first described. There is a manifest coincidence between this description and that given in Psalms xv. and xxiv. And there is also a contrast between the features of the character delineated here, and the character of the Jews as described and condemned in the previous passages, in their state of alienation from God. The subject of the Messiah's kingdom on earth will be one who acts and speaks righteously, who repudiates the gain of oppression and bribery, who will not listen to schemes of violence, nor look upon evil. The privileges of such under Christ's reign are then foretold. The security and plenty of the land under its king are first represented (16). The figurative expressions, "on heights" (margin) and "munitions of rocks," the places of resort in a disturbed country, are symbolical of quiet and safety. In reference to the same period it is written, "My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places." In this respect also, there is a coincidence with what is said in the 15th and 24th Psalms. In the one psalm, the scene of this blessedness is the tabernacle of God, and his holy hill, mount Zion: "Who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?"—and in the other it is the same, the hill of the Lord, and his holy place: "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, or who shall stand in his holy place?" And this also is the scene of the



blessedness described in Isaiah. The eyes of his people shall see the King in his beauty (17). And where is the beauty of Christ to be seen at the time referred to but in Zion? "When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory;" "Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee;" "I am the Lord your God, dwelling in Zion my holy mountain."—"The land very far off," is, if the view given of the context be correct, the new earth in which righteousness shall dwell. This earth has undergone many changes—one when sin entered—another when the flood came,—and another awaits it when he who hath already banished sin from heaven and from paradise, and who is now engaged in removing it from the hearts of his children, shall expel it and its curses from this world; and it shall be once more adorned with the beauties, and enriched with blessings of righteousness. That land was far off when Isaiah prophesied above 2500 years ago, but when Christ shall reign in Zion it shall be seen.

18, 19. *Thine heart shall meditate terror. Where is the scribe? where is the receiver (or, weigher)? where is he that counted the towers? Thou shalt not see a fierce people, a people of a deeper speech than thou canst perceive; of a stammering (or, ridiculous) tongue, that thou canst not understand.*

One cause of thankful congratulation to Israel then will be their deliverance from their enemies. Their past danger and alarms will form the subject of grateful meditation—they shall meditate (on the) terror (then past and gone, a subject of meditation, but no longer of experience); and they shall ask exultingly, Where are their oppressors gone? the strange and terrible people whom they shall see no more (19). It is difficult to determine who is intended by the "scribe," and who by the "weigher" (margin). They appear, however, to denote certain officials in the armies gathered against Jerusalem, and the

allusion may be either to the individual officers, or to particular threatenings made by them. The last clause is more clear, referring evidently to the reconnoitring of the city in order to ascertain its defences and its weakest points of assault. There appears to be a reference to this passage by Paul, 1 Cor. i. 20, so striking is the coincidence: and the lesson which the Jews in their circumstances will draw, may be supposed with great propriety to be that expressed by the Apostle, "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?"

20. *Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken.*

This verse opens with a beautiful invitation to the Jews of those days to avail themselves of the privileges described in verses 16, 17, and proceeds to enlarge upon the peace and security of which Jerusalem will then be the seat. In the last clause, "not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed," there is the carrying out of the idea of the former part of the verse, in which Jerusalem is called "a tabernacle."

21. *But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams (or, broad of spaces, or, hands); wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby.*

And not only will Jerusalem continue so. He who is the glorious Lord—he who will appear in his glory,—will himself be its joy and beauty. A river—still more a broad river—still more a place of broad rivers—is a familiar symbol of beauty and fertility: and a river without the gallant ship, or ship of war, is a symbol of peace: and what these are to a country, Christ will be to Judah during the reign of righteousness on earth. But there may be allusion here to a literal accomplishment of the prediction; and fresh interest is attached to the passage when taken in connexion with other prophecies which

are still unfulfilled. In the description of Ezekiel's temple contained in the last chapters of that prophet—a passage which from its detail it seems necessary to understand literally, and which has never received a satisfactory exposition by figurative interpretation,—at the close of that description, a river is represented as proceeding from the east side of the temple,—waters issue out from under the threshold of the house eastward (1). The rapidity of its rise is then described (3-5). At the distance of a few thousand feet from its source, it is a river of so large volume, unlike the rise of rivers generally, that its waters are to swim in—it cannot be passed over. The direction in which the river flows is next pointed out (8), through the desert to the sea toward the east country. The sea east of Jerusalem is the Dead Sea, whose character corresponds with what is said of healing the waters, and of the marshy extremity of the sea being given to salt. The remainder of the description agrees with what would be the result were a large volume of fresh water to flow into the Dead Sea. The deep or northern extremity of the sea would be healed so that fishes might live in it (9, 10); while the shallow, or southern extremity, which is so shallow as to be called “miry places,” being unaffected by the waters of the river, would continue salt (11). But how does the geographical aspect of the country correspond with the idea of a river flowing from the east of Jerusalem, in which quarter the temple of old was situated, to the Dead Sea? In its present state, the Mount of Olives stands right in the way of the progress of any such river, although, with that exception, everything is favourable to such a supposition,—a valley extending from the holy city to the Dead Sea, when once the Mount of Olives is crossed. And in regard to this one difficulty, there is this striking prediction in the following passage in Zechariah xiv.: “His (Christ's) feet shall stand in that day—the day of the Lord—upon the Mount of

Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east ; and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east, and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley" (4), thus opening up the way for the river in Ezekiel's vision ; and it is added, in accordance with that prophecy, " In that day living waters shall go out from Jerusalem, half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea" (8). The features of the country coincide exactly with these predictions, and the whole might easily and naturally be fulfilled. The rending asunder of the mount, and the laying bare of some now hidden stream by one of those convulsions of nature which it is foretold will precede the reigning of Christ on earth—the Jordan at Paneas has such a fountainhead, formed not by gradual accessions, but bursting forth at once from the parted rock—is all that is necessary in order to the most literal accomplishment of the prediction ; the passage is clear for the before confined waters through the divided mount ; the channel is already prepared to the Dead Sea ; the broad stream described in the text is created. But it will be one, from the rapidity of its motion, owing to the great fall from the level of Jerusalem to that of the Dead Sea, which no ship can pass. There is an allusion to this river in Joel, where it is said, that when " the mountains of Judea shall drop down new wine," implying the restored culture of the vine, now abandoned in the Holy Land ; " and the hills shall flow with milk," implying the abundance of cattle ; " and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters ;" in room of the present empty channels, " a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim," iii. 18. May there not also be an allusion to this river in a Psalm which refers to the same times, the 46th, when it is said, " There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the most High ?" The literal river



proceeding from the temple, carrying fertility into the intervening desert, and sweetening the salt waters of the Dead Sea, will be a fitting symbol of the spiritual blessings which will be dispensed over the world by the Spirit of God when he shall be poured upon all flesh—when the law shall go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem, fertilizing what is spiritually barren, and sweetening what is bitter. It will not in the new earth be a fading tree which will be the symbol of life, as in the first Paradise, but the ever-flowing river—the living water. And, passing from the new earth to which Isaiah looks, to the new heavens to which John looks, in addition to the tree of life, Rev. xxii. 2, the emblem of man's recovery of all the blessings that he has lost, there will be the river of life, the emblem of their recovery to be lost no more.

22-24. *For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver (or, statute-maker), the Lord is our king; he will save us. Thy tacklings are loosed (or, They have forsaken thy tacklings); they could not well strengthen their mast; they could not spread the sail: then is the prey of a great spoil divided; the lame take the prey. And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.*

Here the language of song is again put into the lips of Israel. He on whose shoulder the government shall then be, shall be everything to his people—Judge, Lawgiver, King, Saviour. The idea of the 18th verse is renewed in the 23d, expressed in nautical phraseology. The Jewish nation have become, antecedent to the time when they join in the song of the previous verse, like a shattered vessel—"thy tacklings are loosed;" with a disabled crew unable to refit it—"they could not well strengthen their mast;" unable to secure their safety by flight from their enemies—"they could not spread the sail." But then, when they shall spoil those who have spoiled them—when the spoil of their enemies shall be gathered like the gathering

of a caterpillar, their great spoil shall be divided as a prey, —then, though lame, though so reduced, Israel shall take the prey ; “ She that tarried at home divided the spoil,” Ps. lxxviii. 12. And not only from the oppression of enemies, but from every distress they shall be for ever free (24) : “ I will strengthen that which was sick,” Ezek. xxxiv. 16. Then also, when there shall be no sorrow and no sin, there shall be no remembrance of past iniquity. The sin even of Judah and Israel shall be forgiven : “ In those days, the iniquity of Israel and Judah shall be sought for, and there shall be none ; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found ; for I will pardon them whom I reserve,” Jer. l. 20.

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## CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE subjects of this and the following chapter which form one vision, are so far similar to those which precede, with the exception that particular allusion is made to Edom, the reason of which will appear in the course of remark. Speaking generally, the one chapter foretells the judgments that are to befall the nations at whose hands the ancient people of God have suffered, or may yet suffer ; while the other foretells the prosperity and glory that are in reserve for them in their restored and saved state.

1-4. *Come near, ye nations, to hear ; and hearken, ye people : let the earth hear, and all that is therein (or, the fulness thereof) ; the world, and all things that come forth of it. For the indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies : he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter. Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcasses, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood. And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll ; and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig-tree.*

As in other instances where the great judgments of the Lord against his enemies at last are described, the whole world is enjoined to listen, implying that the ears of all will be made to tingle at these terrible doings; see xxxiii. 13. The indignation of the Lord, when he shall rise to punish the enemies of himself and of his ancient people, is then represented (2). It is then that the Lamb will be angry—that his wrath will be kindled—that he will tread his enemies in his anger, and trample them in his fury—that his fury will come up in his face. So terrible will be the destruction of that time, so numerous the slain, that their sepulchre will be impossible (3)—the very atmosphere will be polluted by the tainted corpses, and the mountains will be washed with blood. The same facts are often declared: “They shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me;” “I will remove far off from you the northern army, and his ill savour shall come up;” “They shall bury in Tophet until there be no place, and the carcasses of this people shall be meat for the fowls of heaven.” The melting the mountain with blood—blood washing them as showers of rain, is represented in a parallel passage by blood coming up to the horses’ bridles. The final judgments of the nations, which are to be marked by such carnage, will, as is often announced, be accompanied by commotions in the heavenly regions; see xxviii. 17: “I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.” In the closest coincidence with Isaiah the words of Christ were: “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.”

5-8. *For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment. The sword of the Lord is filled with blood; it is made fat with fatness, and with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams:*

*for the Lord hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea. And the unicorns (or, rhinoceros) shall come down with them, and the bullocks with the bulls; and their land shall be soaked (or, drunken) with blood, and their dust made fat with fatness. For it is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion.*

These verses describe Idumea or Edom, a country which lay to the south-east of Judea, as the scene of the previous judgments. The context, particularly the 8th verse, shows that the prediction must refer to a period yet to come—to the final national judgments that yet await the earth. At one time, the plain of Megiddo or Armageddon—"He gathered them together to a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon," Jer. xvi. 16; "Great shall be the day of Jezreel" (in the valley of Megiddo), Hos. i. 11:—at another, the valley of Jehoshaphat—"I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat," Joel iii. 2; "Tophet is prepared of old," Is. xxx. 33:—and here Edom, are represented as the seat of the last outpouring of the vial of the wrath of Almighty God; all these—Edom, Megiddo, and Tophet—mountain, plain, and valley, lying within the predicted space of 1600 furlongs or 200 miles, Rev. xiv. 20, over which the carnage described in the 2d and 3d verses is to extend. In many other places, Idumea is particularized as sharing in the plagues of the last days: "Who is this" (in reference to Christ, when he shall go forth to take his kingdom, and to slay those enemies who would not have him to reign over them), "that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah" (one of the chief cities of Edom)? lxiii. 1; "Edom shall be a desolate wilderness for the violence against the children of Judah; but Judah shall dwell for ever," Joel iii. 19, 20; "I shall fill his mountains (mount Seir in Edom) with his slain men, in thy hills, and in thy valleys, and in all thy rivers, shall they fall that are slain with the sword," Ezek. xxxv. 8; "Surely in the fire of my jealousy have I spoken against the residue of the hea-



then, and against all Idumea," Ezek. xxxvi. 5.—The expression, "shall be bathed<sup>1</sup> in heaven," which presents a difficulty from its being said to be bathed *in heaven*, may most easily be understood of wrath, or, as in verse 6, of blood, this being said by anticipation. Similar expressions occur in Deut. xxxii. 42; Jer. xlv. 10. In the 6th and 7th verses, the language used is borrowed from the sacrifice. The nations gathered against Jerusalem are represented as being sacrificed to the Lord's vengeance in the land of Idumea, so that the sword of Divine justice is as it were glutted with slaughter, filled with blood, and fat with fatness—terrible expressions, depicting terrible doings. The various hostile powers are represented by the different animals, with the exception of one, commonly used in sacrifice; lambs, goats, rams, bullocks, or young bulls, and bulls. The national destruction of the wicked is in other places compared to a sacrifice: "Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, assemble yourselves and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel," Ezek. xxxix. 17; "The day of the Lord is at hand; the Lord hath prepared a sacrifice; he hath bid his guests," Zeph. i. 7. The enemies of the Lord are also compared in other places to the beasts of sacrifice. Thus the passage from Ezekiel, just quoted, continues—"Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan." These represent the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, on whom the wrath of the Lord shall descend in the day of the Lord's vengeance (8).—The word translated "unicorns" occurs repeatedly in Scripture, and is always so translated; but what animal is intended is uncertain. The rhinoceros, the buffalo, and the gazelle,

<sup>1</sup> From a root signifying to be filled with drink.

have each had their advocates.—“Shall come down,” is, “shall fall, shall perish.”—The day of the Lord’s vengeance will be a year of recompence upon the nations of the earth on account of their controversy with Zion. This is a view which is frequently given of these judgments, God then dealing with these kingdoms exactly as they have done with his people Israel. The object of them all is to avenge the blood of his servants, Deut. xxxii. 43. This is the reason of past judgments having been inflicted upon the nations. Thus, it is said of Babylon, “As Babylon has caused the slain of Israel to fall, so at Babylon shall fall the slain of all the earth (land),” Jer. li. 49. From this feature of Jehovah’s character, one of his names is derived: “The Lord God of recompences shall surely requite.” It will be in this righteous character that he will reveal himself, even when his sword is dipped in blood: “All they that devour thee shall be devoured; they that spoil thee shall be spoiled,” Jer. xxx. 16.

9, 10. *And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day: the smoke thereof shall go up for ever: from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever.*

From the literality of the other judgments, it seems necessary to consider these predictions also as literal, and not figurative—as pronouncing against Idumea a curse not unlike that which fell upon the cities of the plain when the Lord rained brimstone from heaven upon them. Such judgments imply not merely a state of desolation, such as that country and the neighbouring countries already show, but the impossibility of restoration to fertility, the passage consisting of an accumulation of expressions, each denoting perpetuity of desolation. This corresponds with what is foretold: “When the whole earth rejoiceth I will make thee desolate,” Ezek. xxxv. 14; which seems to imply, that when the reign of righteousness and peace

shall be universal, and the curse of desolation shall be removed from Judea and the other countries which now groan beneath it, Idumea shall remain most desolate, perpetual desolations, except in regard to that portion of the land which Israel will possess: "They shall possess the remnant of Edom," Amos ix. 12. Just as this judgment-stricken world is a beacon to all other worlds—just as the state of Satan and his angels is a beacon to all created intelligences—just as the pillar of salt was a beacon to the men of Lot's day—just as the Dead Sea was a beacon to the neighbouring countries, so the perpetual desolation of Edom may be supposed to answer the same purpose, and be a standing memorial of the iniquity of sin in the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

11-17. *But the cormorant (or, pelican) and the bittern shall possess it; the owl also and the raven shall dwell in it: and he shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion, and the stones of emptiness. They shall call the nobles thereof to the kingdom, but none shall be there, and all her princes shall be nothing. And thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof; and it shall be an habitation of dragons, and a court for owls (or, ostriches, or, daughters of the owl). The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the wild beasts of the island, and the satyr shall cry to his fellow; the screech-owl (or, night-monster) also shall rest there, and find for herself a place of rest. There shall the great owl make her nest, and lay, and hatch, and gather under her shadow: there shall the vultures also be gathered, every one with her mate. Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read; no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them. And he hath cast the lot for them, and his hand hath divided it unto them by line: they shall possess it for ever, from generation to generation shall they dwell therein.*

The remainder of the chapter consists of predictions of different features of the desolation of Edom—that especially of its possession by various wild animals instead of human inhabitants, which occupies the 11th, 13th, and 15th verses. These and the accompanying predictions are already realized, at least in part, in the condition of Edom, according to the testimony of every traveller; but it does

not hence follow, that in the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion, they may not receive a yet more signal fulfilment. Some difficulty has been experienced in defining the various creatures enumerated here. They are generally those which haunt ruined and solitary places. Most of them are known to abound in Edom. The word translated bittern, is generally supposed to mean the porcupine. The special animals intended in the 14th verse particularly, are uncertain. It has been ingeniously applied by Alexander to the habits of classes of animals, viz., those belonging to the desert—those distinguished by a howling cry—those which are shaggy in appearance—and those which are nocturnal. There is an allusion in the close of the 11th verse to the line and plummet, as in 2 Kings xxi. 13, thus uniting the ideas of rectitude and care with utter destruction, implying that the judgments of the land will be exactly proportioned to its guilt. The extinction of the race of Edom, both of people and prince, of ruled and ruler, is described (12) as it is elsewhere predicted, and has been long the fact: "The house of Esau shall be for stubble; there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau," Obadiah 18. The whole is concluded (16) with an assurance, almost called for where such revelations of wo are made, that they all rested on the word of the Lord—that all would be accomplished even in the least important matter; for each creature would have her mate, since to them had the land of Idumea been assigned by the Lord for ever.

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## CHAPTER XXXV.

THIS chapter forms a suitable conclusion to the predictions which it terminates. Its subject is the final pros-



perity, knowledge, holiness, and gladness of Israel under the reign of the Messiah, when God shall remember the land, and shall remember the people. It is foretold, "I will be known of them (Judah) when I have judged thee" (Idumea), Ezek. xxxv. 11. Her judgments are predicted in the previous chapter; and in accordance with the prophecy in Ezekiel, the blessings of Judah, when God shall be known to her as a reconciled God, are here described.

1, 2. *The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon; they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God.*

The pronoun in the first clause, "for them," evidently refers to those who form the general subject of the Book and of this chapter, viz., the ancient people of God. Inanimate nature, cursed for the sake of Israel, is represented as rejoicing for them, that is, in changes which will be for the sake and benefit of the nation. These verses describe the restored fertility of their country when their curse shall be withdrawn. This is frequently the subject of very distinct prediction, and in connexion with their conversion of which it will form an accompaniment. See xxx. 23: "The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing: instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree," lv. 12, 13; "In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities: the desolate land shall be tilled; and they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden," Ezek. xxxvi. 33-37. The high degree of fertility promised to the long desolate land is intimated by its being called the fertility of Lebanon, of Carmel, and Sharon, regions of proverbial richness. Then, too, the nation shall see the glory of the Lord. See ii. 2. Then they shall "say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God," xl. 9; "I, saith the Lord, will be the glory in the midst of her.—Sing and

rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for lo, I come, and will dwell in the midst of thee," Zech. ii. 5, 10.

3, 4. *Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful (or, hasty) heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you.*

The encouragements held out in these verses appear to refer particularly to the final troubles of the nation previous to their ultimate deliverance, immediately before the dawn of their day, when their night shall be darkest,—to the time when it is said that they shall be left stripped and desolate like a beacon on the top of a hill. Of them at that time it is written, that "all hands shall be feeble, and all bones shall be weak as water," Jer. vii. 17. But when so reduced, they are assured of divine interference. God will then reveal himself against their enemies and his enemies, as the God of vengeance and of recompence. "According to their deeds he will repay fury to his adversaries, recompence to his enemies."

5. *Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.*

A greater blessing than the deliverance of Israel from their enemies will be the removal of their spiritual curse—their conversion to God—which will accompany and result from the other. Or the passage may be understood of the conversion of all flesh, which will also be an accompaniment of the deliverances wrought for Israel at last. It appears, however, to be the former which is intended, as the blessings which follow refer to the land of Judea: "In that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness," xxix. 18.

6, 7. *Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where*

*each lay, shall be grass (or, a court for reeds, &c.), with reeds and rushes.*

These verses describe the universal joy caused by the restored fertility of the land. Judea is now, almost without exception, wilderness and desert, and its renewed beauty and fruitfulness, when its curse shall be removed, are often expressed by the blessing of streams and pools, see xxx. 23: "I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys."—In the expression "parched ground,"<sup>1</sup> there is generally understood to be a reference to the well-known phenomenon of the *mirage*. Lowth translates it "glowing sand." Instead of the illusion of the *mirage*, there will be the reality of water. At present, however, the mirage is not to be seen in Palestine, the surface of the ground not being adapted for that phenomenon. The land is, however, literally parched ground. It is often cracked and full of fissures. The idea of fertility is also expressed by the growth of grass<sup>2</sup> in the habitation of dragons. These creatures, whatever they may have been, probably lizards, vipers, which are found there in vast numbers in dry places, are represented as making their abode in ruins and desolate places. Thus it is predicted of Judea, "Thorns shall come up in her palaces; it shall be a habitation for dragons;" and of Edom, "I laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness."

8-10. *And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called, The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those (or, for he shall be with them): the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the Lord shall re-*

<sup>1</sup> In the Hebrew שָׂרָב, Sharab. The word occurs also in xlix. 10, where it is rendered heat. In the Koran, the Arabic of mirage is serab.

<sup>2</sup> Grass. The Hebrew may denote also a court or place, which signification is generally preferred here; the abode of dragons shall be a place of reeds and rushes.

*turn, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*

The blissful state of the land during the reign of the Messiah is further represented by the formation of a highway through a pathless desert. Such a blessing as water is to a parched land, is a highway to a pathless desert—the state, it may be said, of Judea now. Or one highway here may be understood as denoting a number, according to the common scriptural usage, by which one, two, three, &c., denote many. See Ps. lxii. 11; 2 Cor. xii. 8. Under this figure are represented the holiness of the nation (8), their security (9), and their joy (10). These particulars are often established in other places as descriptive of Israel's condition at the period denoted by the context when the Lord shall build up Zion. Instead of being a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, “the people shall be all righteous;” “Jerusalem shall be the holy city; for henceforth there shall no more come unto her the uncircumcised and the unclean.” Instead of the boar out of the wood wasting the land, and the wild beast of the field devouring it, “no lion shall be there;” “they shall not hurt nor destroy in all God's holy mountain;” his people “shall dwell in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places.” And those who are now scattered among all nations, a shame and a reproach, shall come to Zion, and obtain joy and gladness: “The Lord will wipe away tears from off all faces, and the rebuke of his people will he take away from off all the earth.”—“The wayfaring man” is, literally, “he walking in the way.” This, with the preceding clause, (marginal reading,) is rendered by Lowth, “He himself shall be with them walking in the way.” The reference, according to this translation, is to the Messiah, who “will come to Zion, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob.”



The four following chapters contain an historical narrative of events which occurred during the life of Isaiah, and in which the prophet took a share, relating chiefly to the overthrow of the Assyrian army under Sennacherib, B. C. 710 ; and to the illness and recovery of Hezekiah the king of Judah. An abstract of these events is recorded in 2 Chron. xxxii. ; and in 2 Kings xviii., xix., xx., there is another history of them almost identical with that given by Isaiah. So close is the coincidence between the two, that either Isaiah must have been the author of both, or the one is, with slight variations, a copy of the other, or the two have been taken from a third narrative. The general opinion of critics is, that Isaiah was also the author of the account in the Book of Kings, it being probable that these books, as well as those of Chronicles and others, were written by the prophets. This introduction by the prophet of events that occurred in his day, does not at all militate against other parts of this book—the great part of it indeed—being understood as referring to events still to come. It is quite natural that the book should be partly prophetic and partly historical ; just as some of the Psalms of David refer to the circumstances of his own misfortunes, while others refer to events still future. This portion is introduced as an historical narrative, “ it came to pass ;” while the rest is introduced as prophetic, “ the vision of Isaiah.”

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## CHAPTER XXXVI.

THIS chapter relates the circumstances of a conference between Rabshakeh, the leader of the Assyrian army sent against Jerusalem, and an embassy appointed by Hezekiah to meet him, in order to negotiate terms of peace.

1-3. *Now it came to pass in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, that Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the defenced cities of Judah, and took them. And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh from Lachish to Jerusalem, unto king Hezekiah, with a great army: and he stood by the conduit of the upper pool, in the highway of the fuller's field. Then came forth unto him Eliakim, Hilkiab's son, which was over the house, and Shebna the scribe (or, secretary), and Joah, Asaph's son, the recorder.*

The chapter relates first the invasion of Judea by Sennacherib (1), and his successful siege of its fortified cities. The circumstances under which the invasion occurred were the following, as is learned from the previous history in 2 Kings xviii. 7, 13-16. Hezekiah had renounced allegiance to Assyria, and, in consequence, Judea is invaded by Sennacherib, who sought to subject it again to his yoke. Hezekiah acknowledges his offence in revolting from Assyria, and stipulates for peace. This is granted on the condition of paying 300 talents of silver, and 30 of gold, which was agreed to, although the treasury was exhausted and the very temple stripped in order to meet the demand. It is supposed that Sennacherib was guilty of a breach of faith towards Hezekiah; but from whatever cause, and at whatever interval of time, neither of which is recorded, the same monarch sent again an army against Jerusalem; and it is the circumstances connected with its approach that form the subject of this narrative of Isaiah. At the time when Sennacherib despatched Rabshakeh with part of his army to Jerusalem, he himself was engaged with the siege of Lachish (2), a town which lay to the south-west of Jerusalem. Having halted at the upper pool of the city, Rabshakeh had an interview with an embassy from Hezekiah, consisting of three of his chief officers. In the parallel passage in 2 Kings xviii. 18, it is stated, that it was in answer to a request from Rabshakeh that the embassy was sent. It is impossible, and it is of little moment, to determine what officers are intended by the expressions used. An officer

of the house or household, in such a connexion, appears to be equivalent with the modern phrase, a minister of state.

4-10. *And Rabshakeh said unto them, Say ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this wherein thou trustest? I say, sayest thou (but they are but vain words) (or, a word of lips), I have counsel and strength for war (or, but counsel and strength are for the war): now, on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me? Lo, thou trustest in the staff of this broken reed, on Egypt; whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all that trust in him. But if thou say to me, We trust in the Lord our God: is it not he whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and said to Judah and to Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar? Now therefore give pledges (or, hostages), I pray thee, to my master the king of Assyria, and I will give thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them. How then wilt thou turn away the face of one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen? And am I now come up without the Lord against this land to destroy it? The Lord said unto me, Go up against this land, and destroy it.*

The conference is begun haughtily by Rabshakeh. He bids the embassy ask Hezekiah what resources he had to trust in (4), that he should oppose himself to the great king. He inquires (5) if he really said that he had strength to carry on the war, and, if so, who was his trust? If he looked to Egypt (6), that was a broken reed to lean upon. If on God (7), how could he expect his aid, since Hezekiah had just removed his altars, and restricted his worship to Jerusalem, in allusion to the reform made by Hezekiah, 2 Kings xviii. 14, which, although the reverse, it is insinuated, was dishonouring to God. In derision of his want of cavalry, Rabshakeh tauntingly asks him to make an engagement (give pledges) with the king of Assyria, and he would give him 2000 horses if he could find riders for them. If so destitute, how could he repel even the most inferior of the captains of Sennacherib? or how could he expect from Egypt such a supply of cavalry as he required? and Rabshakeh concludes (10) with the bold and

false assertion, that he had received a Divine commission to proceed against the land.

11-22. *Then said Eliakim, and Shebna, and Joah, unto Rabshakeh, Speak, I pray thee, unto thy servants in the Syrian language; for we understand it: and speak not to us in the Jews' language, in the ears of the people that are on the wall. But Rabshakeh said, Hath my master sent me to thy master and to thee to speak these words? hath he not sent me to the men that sit upon the wall, that they may eat their own dung, and drink their own piss, with you? Then Rabshakeh stood, and cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language, and said, Hear ye the words of the great king, the king of Assyria. Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you; for he shall not be able to deliver you. Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord, saying, The Lord will surely deliver us; this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria. Harken not to Hezekiah; for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make an agreement with me by a present (or, seek my favour by a present, or, make with me a blessing), and come out to me: and eat ye every one of his vine, and every one of his fig-tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his own cistern; until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards. Beware lest Hezekiah persuade you, saying, The Lord will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods (or, Elohi) of Hamath and Arphad? where are the gods (or, Elohi) of Sepharvaim? and have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? Who are they among all the gods of these lands, that have delivered their land out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand? But they held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not. Then came Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, that was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, to Hezekiah with their clothes rent, and told him the words of Rabshakeh.*

At this point the members of the embassy, apprehensive that the threats of the Assyrian would intimidate the Jews who listened from the walls of the city, requested him to address them not in the Hebrew, but in the Syrian<sup>1</sup> language. But Rabshakeh refuses (12), on the ground that it was the citizens whom he wished to influence, and

<sup>1</sup> Syrian, אַרְמִי, in Aramean, that is, in Syriac or Chaldaic, from an ancient name of Syria, including also Mesopotamia.



points out the sufferings and revolting extremities from famine, in which resistance to his master would involve them. In the parallel passage in 2 Chron. xxxii. 10, 11, the same thing is expressed more plainly: "Doth not Hezekiah persuade you to give over yourselves to die by famine and by thirst?" Rabshakeh then addresses the Jews in their own tongue (13), and warns them against the professions of safety (14), and the promises of Divine protection made to them by Hezekiah (15). He assures them (16), that if they would be on good terms<sup>1</sup> with the king of Assyria and surrender to him, instead of danger and famine, they would have security and plenty while they continued there, and would be removed, when the king had finished his conquests, to a land as good as their own; implying, that instead of being carried into captivity, and subjected to hardships, which in those days was the customary treatment of prisoners taken in war, they would enjoy all the comforts of their own homes. He advises them against being led away by the appeals of Hezekiah to Divine help (18), this no doubt forming the chief encouragement held out to them by that good prince. He reminds them also how powerless the gods of other nations had proved against Sennacherib, instancing particular cases (19), and maintaining, that in the failure of the gods of these lands, the Jews might see the emblem of the insufficiency of their own for their deliverance. Hamath and Arphad, and probably Sepharvaim also, were cities of Syria. Their conquest, and that of others, by Sennacherib, is introduced in the same boastful way, in x. 9, and xxxvii. 13. In the parallel passage in 2 Chron., the Assyrians are represented at greater length as indulging in reproachful and blasphemous language. Sennacherib's servants spake still more, it is said, against

<sup>1</sup> "Make with me a present," literally, as in the margin, "a blessing," in apparent allusion to the language of eastern salutation. The expression is thus indicative of friendship.

God (Jehovah), and against Hezekiah his servant, xxxii. 16. The proposals of Rabshakeh, however, seem to make no impression on the multitude, who, as instructed by Hezekiah, make no reply to him (21). That it is the multitude who are silent, and not the embassy only, appears from the parallel passage in 2 Kings xviii. 36, where it is said, that "the people held their peace." The officers of Hezekiah return to him with their clothes rent (22), indicative, it may be supposed, of their alarm at the danger of the city, and of their horror at the blasphemies to which they had been compelled to listen.

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## CHAPTER XXXVII.

THIS chapter, which is a continuation of the preceding, records the steps taken by Hezekiah in his extremity—the incidents of another embassy sent by Sennacherib—the prediction by Isaiah of the speedy destruction of the Assyrian host, and the accomplishment of that catastrophe.

1-4. *And it came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard it, that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the Lord. And he sent Eliakim, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, unto Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz. And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of blasphemy (or, provocation): for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth. It may be the Lord thy God will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God, and will reprove the words which the Lord thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that is left (or, found).*

On receiving the report of his officers, Hezekiah, having assumed the common signs of mourning (1), went to the

temple to lay his case before the Lord, acting on the invitation, "Call on me in the time of trouble, I shall deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me," Ps. l. 15; and calling on the Lord in the temple, because a special promise was given to prayer which was presented there. "Under the old dispensation, there were reasons for resorting to the temple, even to offer private supplications, which cannot possibly apply to any church or other place at present. This arose partly from the fact, that prayer was connected with sacrifice, and this was rigidly confined to one spot."—*Alexander*. In the conduct of Hezekiah, so far is there from being any appearance of trusting in Egypt, or in any other power, at this time, that he displays the fullest confidence in God. Those prophecies, therefore, which proclaim wo to Israel for going down to Egypt for help, have not their fulfilment on this occasion. At the same time, while Hezekiah betook himself to prayer, he did not neglect any other means that were available, but (2) sent his officers, with the elders of the priests, also clad in the habiliments of mourning, to the prophet Isaiah, to ask his counsel and prayers. They express to the prophet their dangers (3)—it was a day of trouble—of rebuke by God, and of reproach (margin) by man; and they represent their condition by a figure most significant of the utmost danger and need of Divine interference and aid. The elders of the priests introduced here are understood by some to be old men among the priests—by others, to be heads of the sacerdotal families. The embassy further request the prayers of the prophet in behalf of Jerusalem and those of the nation who were yet safe from the Assyrian invasion, if, perhaps, God would reprove Rabshakeh for his blasphemy against Him who, unlike the false gods of wood and stone with whom he had been compared, was the living God.

5-7. *So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah. And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say unto your master, Thus saith the*

*Lord, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. Behold, I will send a blast upon (or, put a spirit into) him, and he shall hear a rumour, and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.*

The answer of the Lord, through Isaiah, is, not to fear (6), for He would remove their enemy to his own land (7), where he would perish—a prediction which was fulfilled, as we learn from the 37th and 38th verses. A difficulty occurs here, What rumour is intended? It has been supposed to be that concerning Tirhakah, verse 9; but this, Henderson\* remarks, led to a fresh attempt against Jerusalem, and he suggests that the expression refers to the miraculous destruction of that part of the Assyrian army which was before Jerusalem; and that he fled when he received the intelligence of its fate. "A blast" is, in the original, simply "a spirit," understood by some to mean a spirit of courage; by others, a spirit of fear: but left undetermined.

8-13. *So Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah: for he had heard that he was departed from Lachish. And he heard say concerning Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, He is come forth to make war with thee: and when he heard it, he sent messengers to Hezekiah, saying, Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God, in whom thou trustest, deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria. Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, by destroying them utterly, and shalt thou be delivered? Have the gods (or, Elohi) of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed, as Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden which were in Telassar? Where is the king of Hamath, and the king of Arphad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Irah?*

On his return from his unsuccessful mission, Rabshakeh found Sennacherib at Libnah, one of the cities of refuge, a town probably nearer Jerusalem than Lachish which he had left; but whether owing to the failure or the success of the siege, we are not informed. Sennacherib heard



there (9) that the king of Ethiopia was on his way to attack him. Tirhakah was a celebrated conqueror mentioned by Eusebius and other ancient writers. In order to possess himself of Jerusalem before the approach of the Ethiopian army, Sennacherib sends a second message to Hezekiah, repeating the arguments which, on the former occasion, had been addressed rather to the people, reasserting the insufficiency of the Divine protection (10), as he might see from what had befallen other kingdoms (11), and enumerating places (12, 13) which their gods had failed to deliver from the power of Assyria. The expression "all lands," may be either regarded as an ellipse for all the lands which Assyria had subdued, or as uttered in the way of boasting. Many of the places enumerated are either now unknown or doubtful.

14-20. *And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up unto the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord. And Hezekiah prayed unto the Lord, saying, O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth. Incline thine ear, O Lord, and hear; open thine eyes, O Lord, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent to reproach the living God. Of a truth, Lord, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations (or, lands), and their countries, and have cast (or, given) their gods (or, Elohim) into the fire; for they were no gods (or, Elohim), but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them. Now therefore, O Lord our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord, even thou only.*

. Again Hezekiah repairs to the temple in his trouble, taking with him the letter of Sennacherib, and offers up the prayer which follows. In contrast with the gods of the heathen to whom he had been compared, and in reference to Hezekiah's present necessities, he addresses the Almighty (16) as Lord of hosts, of earth as well as of heaven, as the God of Israel, the only God, the Creator. He pleads (17) that he would regard the blasphemies of

Sennacherib. He is not discouraged by the destruction of other nations by Assyria, for theirs were no gods (18, 19) ; but he urges (20) that it might not be so with Jerusalem ; but that the Lord would give her deliverance, not on Jerusalem's account so much as on his own, that his supremacy over other gods might appear—that his own glory might be proclaimed. This is the proper footing evidently on which all prayer should be placed—the spirit in which it should be offered. All blessings, both temporal and spiritual, are to be asked, not so much for the sake of self, as that with them God may be glorified. It is on this footing that they are promised, “I shall deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.” It was on this footing that David asked, Ps. li. 12, 13 ; lxvii. 1, 2 ; and that our Lord himself asked, John xvii. 1. It was this object which was served above any other in the answer which Hezekiah received. The destruction of the Assyrian host stands out more prominently as a manifestation of the glory of God, than as the deliverance of the Jews.—In the expression, “that dwellest between the cherubims,” there is allusion obviously to the shechinah, the symbol of the Divine presence, the most distinguished object in the furnishing of the holy of holies, which appeared between the two cherubims—the symbols of the Church of Christ—which ever looked towards the mercy-seat. This Divine title is very appropriate here, when, like the cherubim, Hezekiah lifted up his eyes, and looked to the heavenly throne.

21-25. *Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent unto Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Whereas thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria : this is the word which the Lord hath spoken concerning him, The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn ; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee. Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed ; and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high ? even against the Holy One of Israel. By (or, by the hand of) thy servants hast thou reproached the Lord, and hast said, By the multitude of my chariots am I come up to the height of the moun-*

*tains, to the sides of Lebanon ; and I will cut down the tall cedars thereof, and the choice fir-trees thereof (or, the tallness of the cedars thereof, and the choice of the fir-trees thereof) : and I will enter into the height of his border, and the forest of his Carmel (or, the forest and his fruitful field). I have digged, and drunk water ; and with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of the besieged (or, fenced and closed) places.*

The answer of the Lord, (which is very different from his threatenings against Judah when charged with trusting in Egypt,) granted so favourably when prayed for because God, and no human power, was had recourse to, comes to Hezekiah through the prophet. The inhabitants of Jerusalem are represented as laughing to scorn their arrogant and presumptuous foe (22). The folly of his taunts is then exposed. They had not been directed against false gods, who could not vindicate themselves, but against the Holy One of Israel (23), a God who was not to be mocked. The foolish boastings of Sennacherib, which are represented as put into his own lips, are recapitulated. Besides the reproaches by his servants, (Rabshakeh and his other messengers,) he had boasted of the achievements of his mighty host, and of the devastation it had wrought (24), of the difficulties he had surmounted, and the extremities to which he had reduced the cities he had besieged (25). The range of Lebanon included several of the places mentioned in verses 12, 13, as having been overthrown by the Assyrian host. Mount Carmel was also included in the scene of its invasion. The expression may, however, be taken in its literal and general sense of fruitful field, as in the margin.—The boast, “I have digged,” may apply to the digging of wells by Sennacherib in his progress, a great accomplishment in such a country for such an army ; or, as the context refers to severities exercised, it may be regarded as partly synonymous with the following clause, as referring to digging through the embankments by which water was preserved for cities, one of the first injuries which a besieging

army would be likely to inflict. This at least is the boast of the last clause.—May there not be in the clause, “with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of the besieged places,” allusion to the well-known custom of opening or shutting with the foot the furrows made for irrigation in the east, so as to admit or exclude the water? The boast would then apply that as easily as the husbandman shuts off with his foot from the furrow the flow of water, had Sennacherib stopped the supplies of cities.

26-29. *Hast thou not heard long ago, how I have done it; and of ancient times, that I have formed it? now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldest be to lay waste defenced cities into ruinous heaps, (or, Hast thou not heard how I have made it long ago, and formed it of ancient times? should I now bring it to be laid waste, and defenced cities to be ruinous heaps?) Therefore their inhabitants were of small power (or, short of hand), they were dismayed and confounded: they were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb; as the grass on the house-tops, and as corn blasted before it be grown up. But I know thy abode (or, sitting), and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me. Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult, is come up into mine ears; therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.*

The Almighty is now represented as indignantly addressing Sennacherib, and telling him that he was but his own instrument of inflicting judgments which he had long before determined, and therefore it was that cities had been sacked and their inhabitants enfeebled (27). The invasion of Judea by Assyria had been foretold. The feebleness of the inhabitants is represented by the similitude of grass, even of grass which grew on the housetops,—in reference to the flat housetop of the east, on which any vegetable, from the scantiness of soil, must be of the most delicate description,—and of corn blighted when in the blade. The whole proceedings of the Assyrian monarch, even the most minute, (represented by his sitting down, margin), going out and coming in, (as in Ps. cxxxix. 2,)



God declares to have been known to and regulated by him (28); and for his rage, not against his people, but against himself, he would treat him (29) as it is necessary to treat the excited and maddened ox, which, however unmanageable, is subdued and easily guided by the hook or ring fixed in its nose. So is it declared the boisterous raging of the Assyrian monarch would be quieted, and he would be led back by the way he came;—a prediction which was fulfilled when, on the fall of the division of his army before Jerusalem, he ignominiously fled.

30-32. *And this shall be a sign unto thee, Ye shall eat this year such as groweth of itself; and the second year that which springeth of the same; and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruit thereof. And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah (or, the escaping of the house of Judah that remaineth) shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward. For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape (or, the escaping) out of mount Zion: the zeal of the Lord of hosts shall do this.*

The first of these verses presents a manifest difficulty. It was very possible that the crop had been utterly destroyed for that year by the ravages of the Assyrians, and therefore the nation could have only the natural fruits of the earth for their sustenance; but how that state of things should exist for a second year—how it should not be until the third year that they should sow and reap—and especially how these future incidents should be a sign of a deliverance that, to be available, must be immediate, does not appear. No application of it to the circumstances of Hezekiah is satisfactory; neither may it be altogether satisfactory to refer it to future events—to the last and final deliverance of Israel; but this view appears to be so as much at least as any attempted application of it to the time of Hezekiah. There is no reason to suppose that the Jewish nation did, for the two years subsequent to Sennacherib's destruction, refrain from the culture of the soil. The fact that the context is limited to the circumstances of Hezekiah is not of itself a sufficient reason for

discarding the idea of a particular clause referring to future events, it being not uncommon for the prophet to glance from particular dangers and deliverances of the Jewish people, and the signs of these, to the dangers and deliverances which they shall yet experience, and the signs of these. It was but a very vague announcement that was made to Hezekiah on the former occasion. Nothing more definite was declared than that his enemy would hear "a rumour," and go away. There was little here to hang faith upon, but it was enough for Hezekiah; and so the declaration of a sign of the final security of Judah, uttered in the circumstances in which it was, would produce in such a heart the effect, the encouragement of a sign. The immediate context harmonizes sufficiently with this view, which is advanced only in the absence of any satisfactory application of the prediction to the time of Sennacherib. Nothing is more common than to represent the future condition of Israel, when returned to the Lord, by their peaceful agricultural pursuits: "They shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them; they shall not plant, and another eat," lxxv. 21. The language of the subsequent context (31) is also in exact accordance with what is foretold of the remnant of Israel who shall survive the final judgments of their race: "I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon; his branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree;" and in the only other instance in which the accompanying and remarkable expression, "the zeal of the Lord of hosts shall do this,"—an expression too strong, it may almost be said, if applied only to the return of the nation to their former condition after the removal of Sennacherib,—this forcible expression in that other instance refers to what is synonymous with the conversion and peace of Israel, the reign of Christ upon the throne of David, ix. 7.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The two expressions, "such as groweth of itself," וְהָיָה כְּעֵץ שֶׁלֹּא יִצְרָא, and "that which

33-38. *Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields (or, shield), nor cast a bank against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the Lord. For I will defend this city to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake. Then the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred and four score and five thousand : and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh. And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god (or, Elohi), that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword ; and they escaped into the land of Armenia (or, Ararat) : and Esar-haddon his son reigned in his stead.*

After this digression, if it be so, but which was such as would lead Hezekiah to infer deliverance from present evils, the prophet returns to the immediate subject of the passage, and reveals more fully than before the fate of the Assyrians, a step which was unnecessary if any direct sign was given of that event. The language of the 33d verse seems to imply that the army never reached Jerusalem ; and this question, with many others, as, whether Sennacherib was present with his army when it met its doom?—whether the united host was involved in the judgment, or only a large division of it?—what proportion escaped ? these questions are left open. The last statement regarding the monarch is, that he was engaged with the siege of Libnah, with part of his army, while the other was sent to Jerusalem ; but whether, or where, a junction of the whole body was effected, is not recorded : at all events, the safety of Jerusalem was secured (35). For the honour of his own name, which had been blasphemed, and from regard to his covenant with David, the Lord would, and did defend Jerusalem. The fulfilment of the Divine promise by the destruction of the Assyrian host is then recorded (36), but the manner of it is not ;

springeth of the same," זָרַח, appear to be synonymous, denoting the grain which springs up of itself the year after a field has been reaped.

and though a fertile, it is a fruitless subject for the exercise of fancy. Sudden it must have been, for it was over before the early dawn;—silent it seems to have been, for it did not disturb those whom it spared, who did not know the fate of their companions until they awoke in the morning;—miraculous it certainly was, and mysterious it still is. The prediction of the fact was enough for Hezekiah, and the assurance of the fact will be enough wherever there is faith like his in the word of God. The astonished monarch returned to Nineveh, his capital (37); and he who had been made to illustrate the omnipotence of the God of Israel, against whom he had blasphemed, next illustrates the impotence of his own gods in whom he trusted, having perished by the swords of his sons (38) at the shrine of Nisroch, his god.

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## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THIS chapter, after a brief narrative of the illness and recovery of Hezekiah, records his song of thanksgiving for the Lord's mercies toward his servant. Critics are divided in opinion on the question, whether the events described occurred before or after the destruction of the Assyrian army. Pridcaux, Usher, and others, are of the former opinion, Josephus asserts the latter to be the case. This part of the historical narrative differs much more than what precedes, from the parallel passage in 2 Kings xx.

1-3. *In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order (or, give charge concerning thy house): for thou shalt die, and not live. Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the Lord, and said, Remember*



*now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight: and Hezekiah wept sore (or, with great weeping).*

A fatal disease—it is not said what—had seized King Hezekiah, and he is told by Isaiah to prepare for death. Some have supposed that his malady was the plague, from the circumstance of the boil which is said to be a symptom of this disease. The command to give charge concerning his house (margin), seems to refer to the settlement of his affairs generally, with particular reference perhaps to the succession to the throne. As was the custom with that good king, he betakes himself in his danger to prayer (2), turning away from his attendants to secure greater composure. His plea with God is that of his past devotedness in his service (3). It does not follow that the example of Hezekiah in using such an argument is one which ought to be followed in all circumstances, or even that it is right in any circumstances. His position, however, was a very peculiar one. As king of Judah he had done much to promote the fear of God among God's own chosen people. His dissolution might be a deathblow to that cause; his life might advance it still further; and on this account may he have presented his prayer on the ground that he did. David often uses a similar plea, as in Psalm lxxxvi., in which he not only urges his necessity (1), but also his holiness (2), his confidence in God (2), his devotional spirit (3), his sincerity (4). The bitterness of Hezekiah's grief has been ascribed to various causes; to the prospect of his death without leaving a successor to his throne, being at this time childless—to his being cut off in middle life (10)—to his too strong attachment to earthly things—to his looking upon his threatened death as judicial, inflicted on account of sin. This view obtains some corroboration from the last clause of verse 10, "I am deprived<sup>1</sup> of the residue of my years,"

<sup>1</sup> From נָחַץ, 1. to visit; 2. to miss. In plural, to cause to be missed.

the verb, according to Henderson and Alexander, denoting penal infliction. It does so in such an instance as this, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children. There is, however, nothing to indicate that the tears of the monarch were not of that godly sort which is unto salvation, which God puts into his bottle, so precious are they in his sight. At all events, there was much in the prayer to recommend it to God, else it would not have been regarded so favourably as it was.

4-8. *Then came the word of the Lord to Isaiah, saying, Go and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years. And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city. And this shall be a sign unto thee from the Lord, that the Lord will do this thing that he hath spoken; Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sun-dial (or, degrees by, or, with the sun) of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down.*

The answer comes in the very way that Hezekiah sought, which is not always the case even with the best of the Lord's servants, Ex. iii. 11, 12; 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9;—on account of his prayers and tears, he is assured of a prolongation of life (5). Nay, more is granted than he asked; to the promise of recovery there is added that of deliverance from Assyria (6), and there is given a sign of the truth of the divine promise (7). The assurance of deliverance from Assyria does not necessarily imply that the occurrence preceded the destruction of the Assyrian army, as subsequent invasions might be anticipated and feared from a power which was then the greatest upon earth. The sign which the prophet received was the miraculous return of the shadow made by the sun on the dial of Ahaz, the father of Hezekiah. In the corresponding passage in 2 Kings, it is further said that it was left optional with Hezekiah whether the shadow would return or advance ten degrees, a circumstance calculated to impart

increased confidence. Considerable doubt exists as to the precise meaning of the expression translated dial, that idea not being brought out so clearly in the original as in the English translation, (see margin).<sup>1</sup> Josephus understands it of the steps or stair of the palace of Ahaz. The question, however interesting in its bearings on the history of science, is here immaterial, the miraculous sign remaining unaffected, the shadow made by the sun retrograding as seen on some measure or other of the day.

9-14. *The writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness: I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave: I am deprived of the residue of my years. I said, I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord, in the land of the living: I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world. Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent: I have cut off like a weaver my life; he will cut me off with pinning sickness (or, from the thrum): from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me. I reckoned till morning, that, as a lion, so will he break all my bones: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me. Like a crane, or a swallow, so did I chatter; I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail with looking upward: O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for (or, ease) me.*

These and the remaining verses form the prayer of Hezekiah. It does not occur in the parallel account in 2 Kings, for what reason cannot be known. He first describes his feelings when he appeared to be in the grasp of death. He thought of the bitterness of being cut off in the mid-day of life (10), which it was with him, his age at this time being 39 years. The expression "in the cutting off" has been understood variously. The Hebrew original signifies literally rest, standing still. This signification is preferred by many, the meaning being "in the rest or quiet of my day," that is, when I had rest—when I was delivered from all mine enemies. The clause, "I am deprived of the residue of my years," seems to imply that he anticipated a long reign; and may not the discipline

<sup>1</sup> The signification of the original noun is—1. an ascending; 2. a step or stair; then by inference a degree.

which he experienced have been intended to give him, what he needed, a better insight than he had into the feebleness of the tenure by which he held life and all the blessings which to him life possessed? Another source of regret was, that he could no more see the Lord in the land of the living (11), perhaps in reference to the enjoyment of his worship in his temple, in this respect resembling David who, when banished from Jerusalem, lamented so often and so bitterly his loss of the services of the sanctuary. He thought of his death as resembling the taking down of a shepherd's tent, the one hour complete, the next in pieces; as like the cutting off of a web from the loom, not of a thing decayed but perfect;—he thought so would he be cut off in the full vigour of life, and as in a single day (from day to night). This allusion to the apprehended suddenness of his removal agrees with the idea of his malady being the plague, which runs its fatal course with great rapidity. The word rendered “age,” signifies in the original, “generation,” “dwelling.” The second of these meanings is generally preferred, when the reading is, “my habitation is departed.” The expression “pining sickness,” is in the margin “thrum.” This rendering is to be preferred. It is to be understood of the thrums by which the web is fixed to the loom. Hezekiah next represents himself (13) as anticipating the fate of the prey which the lion has seized. Such was his position, so that he did not expect to survive the day. He likens his grief (14) to that of the various birds which are enumerated, which chirp and mourn when deprived of their mates. The clause, “mine eyes fail with looking upward,” expresses beautifully the perseverance with which he looked to God and waited for his salvation. He had lifted up his eyes to heaven for help, until they had become weak. The clause, “O Lord, I am oppressed,” appears to describe what his language was when under trouble,—he then made God his refuge.



15-20. *What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it: I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul. O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit: so wilt thou recover me, and make me to live. Behold, for peace I had (or, on my peace came) great bitterness; but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it (or, thou hast loved my soul) from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back. For the grave cannot praise thee; death can not celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day; the father to the children shall make known thy truth. The Lord was ready to save me; therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the Lord.*

The prayer to the Lord by Hezekiah to interfere in his behalf is immediately answered. As the previous verses describe the sad feelings which overwhelmed him when the hand of chastisement was laid upon him, so those which follow express his gratitude when it was lifted off. It was too full for language to utter (15), "What shall I say?" God had both promised and performed; so David often proclaims his mercy in promising, and his truth in performing, as both alike excellent, reaching unto the heavens and to the clouds, Ps. lvii. 10. He resolves that a serious life shall be the fruit of all his sufferings. He proceeds (16) to recognise his dependence and that of all men upon God. Some understand the first clauses of this verse not of the life of the body, but of the support given to the soul by the divine promises in times of trouble. In the last clause Hezekiah expresses his conviction that God would continue his goodness in preserving that life (or, according to the other view, that spiritual support) which he had already vouchsafed. He contrasts his present peaceful and happy state, now that his fears and pains are over (17), with what it was. According to the English version, the clause, "for peace I had great bitterness," signifies that the peace which he enjoyed before his illness seized him had been turned into sorrow. Alexander puts the reverse meaning on the passage, and translates, "to

peace is turned my bitter bitterness,"—making it a description not of his affliction but of his recovery, and this agrees better with the immediate context. The last clause, "thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back," must be understood as teaching that his sins had been forgotten by God, in so far as he had ceased to punish him on account of them. This implies that he regarded his sin as the cause of his affliction. He notices (18-20) the duty laid upon him in consequence of his deliverance. Had he been cut off he could no more have honoured God on earth. In the state of the dead, the soul separated from the body cannot be engaged actively in God's service, as the believer can be on earth and will be in heaven. Even on earth he can be about his master's business in ways in which he cannot be again. He can serve God, then, in ways in which even the angels cannot serve him, for example, in being a witness for God in the world, testifying against sin—in patient submission to the discipline he receives in the school of Providence—in forwarding the cause of righteousness in the earth. But the grave is not the place for this. Not only cannot the righteous advance there the divine glory,—the sinner cannot secure his own salvation—the offers of the gospel are not extended to those that go down into that pit. But although the dead could not praise God, the living could, (19), and this Hezekiah resolved to do. The repetition, "the living, the living," implies how full the heart of the king was with a sense of the importance of life; how sweet a boon he counted it to be. He describes its uses, viz., first to praise God, who has the first claim to the benefit of his own gift; and next, to instruct others in the truth of God. His gratitude would not evaporate in thanksgiving, he would unite the working hand with the loving heart and the adoring tongue. The last clause of the verse cannot be applied to Hezekiah, who was then childless, unless it be understood of him as the father of the nation; or it may

be understood generally of the duty of man. To this use David turned his possession of divine blessings: "Uphold me with thy free Spirit: then shall I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee," Ps. li. 12, 13. In addition to other ways of showing forth the glorious praise of his deliverer, the king declares his purpose (20) of uniting with others in his public praise, by having his song set to music and sung in the temple. True love seeks to meet the object of it; and as it is in his temple that the Lord is peculiarly present, his servants will not only keep his sabbaths, but will also reverence his sanctuary.

21, 22. *For Isaiah had said, Let them take a lump of figs, and lay it for a plaster upon the boil, and he shall recover. Hezekiah also had said, What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the Lord?*

In the first of these verses there is recorded the means to be used by the direction of Isaiah for the recovery of the king—a lump of figs had to be applied to the boil.<sup>1</sup> The fig is employed in British practice for promoting supuration and healing, in cases where less manageable applications cannot be used, and no doubt would be in frequent use for such purposes in a country where the fruit abounded. According to the parallel passage in 2 Kings xx. 8, Hezekiah had been promised that on the third day he would be so far recovered as to go up to the house of the Lord, and it is to that circumstance that the question in the close of the chapter refers. In the parallel passage in 2 Kings xx., these verses are introduced as after the 6th verse, which seems their more natural position. The imagined transposition has been accounted for on the supposition that the verses were omitted by some transcriber, who, discovering his mistake after copying the passage, added them at the end; or that they were added

<sup>1</sup> "Lay it for a plaster," from כָּרַח, to rub, to break by rubbing, to soften. The literal and appropriate meaning is, therefore, to rub the figs, or to lay them softened, upon the boil.

by the prophet as a supplement to the rest. There is no need, however, for so awkward an explanation of the order of the passage as is contained in the former of these suppositions. It was quite natural that Isaiah, after relating the writing of Hezekiah, should recur to the circumstances which led to it, and add a postscript to his previous description of the sickness of the king.

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## CHAPTER XXXIX.

THIS chapter narrates the visit of a Babylonian embassy to Hezekiah after his recovery; the snare into which it led him in an ostentatious display of his treasures, and the consequences to which it led, viz., the rebuke of the king by Isaiah, and the prediction of the Babylonish captivity.

1, 2. *At that time Merodach-baladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah: for he had heard that he had been sick, and was recovered. And Hezekiah was glad of them, and shewed them the house of his precious things (or, spicery), the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour (or, jewels, or, vessels, or, instruments), and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed them not.*

Merodach-baladan—in 2 Kings xx. 12, it is Berodach-baladan, either from an error in transcribing, or, more probably, from the two consonants being very frequently interchanged—sent an embassy with presents, as was then common, to congratulate Hezekiah upon his recovery (1). At this period, Babylon was a province of Assyria, (compare 2 Kings xvii. 24, and 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11.) How, then, should it happen that the province of a power which was the enemy of Hezekiah, should send him its congratulations? The difficulty is removed by what is recorded



in a fragment of Berosus, which is preserved in the Armenian version of Eusebius, viz., that for some years about this time, Babylon had thrown off the yoke of Assyria, and that Merodach-baladan was one of the usurpers who reigned. Being so situated in regard to Assyria, it may be supposed that it was his own interest chiefly which he was consulting in his mission to Hezekiah. An alliance with Babylon would also naturally be acceptable to the Jewish monarch in his circumstances, which will account for the marked attention which the mission received at his hands. It is stated in the parallel passage in 2 Chron. xxxii. 31, that one of its objects was to make inquiry of the wonder that was done in the land. This may relate to the destruction of the Assyrian host, but more probably to the sign given to Hezekiah, viz., the retrocession of the solar shadow, which was a subject very likely to interest the Babylonians, whose early and great attention to astronomy is well known, Chaldea having been the cradle of astronomical science. Hezekiah welcomed the embassy, and made a proud display of his treasures to them (2). The extent of his riches at this time is detailed at length in 2 Chron. xxxii. 27-30. How these had been amassed so rapidly is not fully stated. It was not very long before that he had to strip the temple to meet the demand of Assyria. Much of his wealth may have been obtained in the Assyrian camp; and it is written that after his deliverance from Sennacherib, "many brought gifts unto the Lord to Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah king of Judah; so that he was magnified in the presence of all nations from henceforth," 2 Chron. xxxii. 23. The motive which induced him to act as he did was evidently pride, and we see in his proceedings, what is a common case, how soon the impressions made by his afflictions were obliterated—how completely the resolution to walk softly with the Lord all his days, had been forgotten. Just so it was with Israel, when, moved by the terrors of Sinai, all the

people answered with one voice, and said, All the words that the Lord hath said will we do ; and yet, within forty days, when the thunders of Sinai no longer sounded in their ears, they were at their idols again, and were worshipping the golden calf. In 2 Chron. xxxii. 26, it is said, " Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him, for his heart was lifted up."

3, 4. *Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men ? and from whence came they unto thee ? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country unto me, even from Babylon. Then said he, What have they seen in thine house ? And Hezekiah answered, All that is in mine house have they seen : there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shewed them.*

The prophet is sent by the Lord to inquire whence the embassy came, and with what object. The reply of Hezekiah has been understood by some to express how wide his fame was, since the mission had come from such a distance ; by others, as intended to intimate that it was from too remote a quarter to excite the prophet's fears of any alliance with them ; and by others, as meant to justify the hospitality and attention which had been paid to them. All this, however, is only matter of ingenious conjecture. The prophet next asks what they had seen in his house ; and the monarch, who, by this time, it may be supposed, had discovered his error, conceals nothing, palliates nothing, but makes an unreserved confession that there was nothing that he had not shown.

5-8. *Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the Lord of hosts ; Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon : nothing shall be left, saith the Lord. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away ; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon. Then said Hezekiah to Isaiah, Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken : he said moreover, For there shall be peace and truth in my days.*

The prophet now, having first announced by what au-

thority he spake, foretells the captivity in Babylon, whither would be carried all the treasures that the Jewish monarch had so vauntingly exposed to the gaze of the Babylonian messengers; the spectators of his glory and the occasion of his guilt thus becoming, by a just retribution, the spectators and instrument of his country's shame. The prediction of the 6th verse, which began to be fulfilled when Manasseh was carried to Babylon, 2 Chron. xxxiii., was finally accomplished to the letter at the Babylonish captivity by Nebuchadnezzar. All, it was said, would be carried away, nothing would be left, and so it was: "All the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the king and of his princes, all these Nebuchadnezzar brought to Babylon," 2 Chron. xxxvi. 18. That captivity, while it was the punishment of the nation's guilt, was also the punishment of Hezekiah's individual sin, for it was added (7) that his own descendants should be particularly involved in the judgments of the nation. Manasseh his son, Jehoiachim, and Zedekiah, were successively carried to Babylon, and all the princes. That these last were employed about the royal household appears from Daniel i. 2, where it is said that certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes, were selected to be trained up for becoming the personal attendants of the king. Eunuchs were very often employed as officers at eastern courts; hence these expressions came to be regarded as synonymous, and the former does not necessarily bear in every case its literal meaning. The punishment of Hezekiah was not visited on him in his own day, for he humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the Lord came not upon them in the days of king Hezekiah, 2 Chron. xxxii. 26. The humbled monarch bears his sentence with submission and with gratitude (8); with submission, because it was the word of the Lord, and good, or righteous;

and with gratitude, because the stroke did not descend upon his own head, and in his own day.<sup>1</sup>

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## CHAPTER XL.

THE remainder of the book, forming one prophecy, has been styled the second part of Isaiah, as if distinguished somehow, and marked off from the other division, an arrangement for which there seems no necessity, embracing as it does the same subjects as preceding prophecies, only detailed with greater fulness, and interrupted less frequently by references to other nations than the Jews, or to passing events in their history. The return of that people from the captivity in Babylon has generally been supposed to form the subject of the fortieth chapter ; but, according to the view given of Isaiah's writings in the previous pages, it refers to their final settlement in their own land, when they shall have been gathered from the nations among which they are now scattered. The prophecy, in many parts, seems utterly inapplicable to the circumstances of the return from the Babylonish captivity : its language requires constant clipping and paring—constant limiting and qualifying in order to adapt it to that event, while it receives its full significancy when applied to the future history of Judah, and is in exact keeping with other prophetic Scripture bearing on that subject. This chapter foretells the final deliverance of the Jewish nation from all their sorrows ; it connects this event with the reign of Christ on earth, and the destruction of his enemies ; it describes the power of this King, contrasting

<sup>1</sup> Truth, אֱמֶת. Some understand by this word the true religion. Others use it in its primary sense of continuance, stability.



with it the impotence of idols, and closes with a notice of the blissfulness of his reign.

1. *Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.*

The prophecy begins with calling upon comforters to speak comfortably to the Jews, by declaring the termination of their woes. Who these comforters are, is not specified. The same vagueness in reference to the same circumstance is observable elsewhere. For example, it is written, In that day, when the Lord shall be in the midst of Jerusalem, and she shall not see evil any more, "it shall be said to Jerusalem," by whom is not stated, "fear thou not," Zeph. iii. 16; "I will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings," xli. 27; "They"—who is not said—"shall call them (Jerusalem) the redeemed of the Lord, the holy city," lxii. 12. In the text the vagueness is qualified to some extent by the words "your God." Whoever those comforters of the Jews may be, they are his servants. The reference seems to be to the converted men of those days generally, or perhaps to those who are specially the Lord's servants, the prophets of the Lord. These had often been called on to proclaim curses against the nation; now they are to exchange this language for that of blessing.

2. *Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem (or, to the heart), and cry unto her, that her warfare (or, appointed time) is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.*

The comfort first communicated to the nation is, that their sufferings (their warfare or hard service) were all over, and that their joys would be greater even than their woes. It might be said that their iniquity was pardoned<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Pardoned, from נָחַם, to be well pleased with; in Hiphil, to satisfy, or cause to be pleased. There is thus contained in the expression the idea of pleasure in forgiving.

when their national judgments, inflicted for national sins, had been removed. The same form of speech occurs in verse 17 of the previous chapter. The cause of their forgiveness is placed on its true footing elsewhere: "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own name's sake." The last clause refers certainly to the blessings of the nation. Their judgments, so far from being the double of what justice might call for, must be regarded, terrible as they shall have been, as yet less than the measure of their iniquity. In parallel passages, the sense is evidently that, in proportion to the severity of their judgments will be, in a double ratio, the abundance of their blessings: "For your shame ye shall have double—in their land they shall possess the double; everlasting joy shall be unto them," lxi. 7; "Turn ye to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope, even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee," Zech. ix. 12. This language speaks very expressively of the future prosperity of the nation. Their trials have far exceeded those of other kingdoms, and so, not as much only, but twice as much, will her blessings exceed her evils. Lowth translates—"she shall receive at the hands of the Lord (blessings) double to the punishment of all her sins." The literality of the expression "double" must not, however, be pushed too far. On this Alexander remarks, that "it is not used mathematically to denote proportion, but poetically to denote abundance, like the equivalent expression in Job xlii. 10." The occurrence of "double," as the measure of the nation's prosperity, in every instance is, however, remarkable.

3-5. *The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight (or, a straight place), and the rough places plain (or, a plain place). And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.*

These verses introduce a herald announcing the approach of the Lord to Zion, the second of the consolations which are given in the chapter to the Jewish nation. The language appears to be borrowed from the eastern custom of a party preceding an influential personage, or an army, in their journeys, to open up a way, a necessary precaution where regular roads did not exist. But what approach of the Lord is it that is associated in Scripture with the final prosperity of Israel? It is his coming to Zion, not to suffer, but to establish his kingdom of righteousness among men. But is this view consistent with the application of the voice or herald to John the Baptist, the application of it made by the evangelists, made by John himself? Must not the whole, in that case, be referred to the first coming of our Lord in the flesh? If the subject-matter of John's cry be attended to, it will be seen, that while he announced the first appearance of Christ on earth, he intimated also another; that while he was the voice that cried that Christ came to ascend the altar of justice, to become the sacrifice, he also cried that he would come again to sit on the throne of righteousness, the period to which the context in Isaiah limits the full application of the passage. The party from Jerusalem to whose inquiry, "Who art thou?" John replied, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness," put another question, "Why baptizest thou then?" to which he answered, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. Whose fan is in his hand, and he shall thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire." Compare Matt. iii. 3, and John i. 19-28. This second announcement did not apply to the appearance of Christ on earth then—it refers to his coming again to reign over a renewed world. The

conclusion at least of the passage in Isaiah can be understood only of yet future times. In what sense was every valley exalted in the days of our Lord? The glory of the Lord is not yet revealed on Zion; all flesh have not yet seen it. While, therefore, the Baptist is to be regarded as the voice, what he did cry is not to be limited to the coming of Christ in his days. This part of the cry of the voice, or rather of a voice, which it is in both cases, is not applied to the circumstances of the Baptist at all; indeed, it is not so much as quoted, except in one of the four cases in which it occurs—in that of Luke. In the others only a mere fraction of the whole passage, viz., the third verse, or the substance of it, is quoted, the rest being manifestly inapplicable at the time; and although the whole passage is quoted by Luke, that does not necessarily imply that it was all to be regarded as fulfilled then. The expression, “in the wilderness,” may be connected either with what precedes or with what follows. The subsequent context seems to require the latter. What the import of preparing the way of the Lord, the exalting of every valley, and so forth, is, can be known only from the event. The 4th verse may be but an expansion of the idea in the 3d, implying that the hinderances in the way of Christ’s appearing will then be removed—that the set time to favour Zion will then be come. May not the passage, however, be understood more literally? May there not be allusion to one of the wonders of modern times, to that mode of travelling which is now so rapidly supplanting every other? How literally descriptive of the highway of the present time, the railway, is the language used here and in parallel passages? What is it but making straight in the desert a highway? What is it but the exalting of the valley, and the making low of the mountain and hill—the making crooked places straight, and the rough plain? What is it but the casting up the highway, along with the apparent paradox of casting out the stones? lxii. 10. It



is no objection that such minuteness is beneath the dignity of prophecy, for the same thing is witnessed in other predictions, as in that of the capture of Babylon by Cyrus, where the feast of a number of sensual men, the leaving open of a river-gate, and other minutiae, are introduced. The import of the expression, "the glory of the Lord," can likewise be understood only from the event, see ii. 2. Here it is represented as an appearance which will be manifest to the eye—which all flesh shall see. Peculiar attention is called to these truths, and a reason is given for believing in them in the clause "for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." However hard they may be for faith to receive, they have the strongest possible attestation in the fact that they are the words of the Lord.

6-8. *The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.*

A third element of comfort to Israel is the destruction of her enemies. The commencement of these verses is obscure from its abruptness. The voice, rather a voice, it is not said whose—it may be that referred to in the previous clause, that of God—says, cry. It is not said to whom it says, cry—who the party addressed is; it would appear to be the servants of the Lord, or men generally, who shall see his wonders when he shall appear in his glory. The party, whoever they be, immediately asks what they are to proclaim? The answer is given; they are to cry, "All flesh is grass," &c. Taken in connexion with the context, this passage must refer to that awful destruction of human life and prostration of all human glory, which will mark those national judgments of the world which are to precede the reign of righteousness. These two events are connected together in numerous

other places; and it is quite natural that in this prospective description of comfort to Israel, while one voice should be represented as announcing the approach to earth of the King of righteousness, another voice should proclaim the overthrow of all Israel's enemies. In point of time this will precede the other, but as an element of consolation it will be inferior to the other, and hence it may be put last. At the time pointed to, when all the promises given to Israel shall be made good, and when there shall be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until that time when the mountains shall melt with blood, and the carcasses of the slain shall lie unburied on the earth, there will be greater emphasis given than ever before to the truth "that all flesh is grass," and that "the word of the Lord standeth for ever." The same trust in God, and fearlessness of their enemies as here, are inculcated on the Jews in a passage in a following chapter, relating, as the context shows, to the same point of time, "I, even I, am he that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man, which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy maker?" li. 12, 13.—The expression "goodliness" in the original, signifies properly good-will, kindness. It has been so understood here. It has also been rendered grace, beauty; also goodness, in the sense of imaginary excellence. The Septuagint, which is followed in 1 Peter i. 24, renders it glory. Alexander supposes that a contrast is drawn between the precarious favour of man and the infallible promise of God. There is also, however, if not chiefly, a contrast between the impotence of man and the omnipotence of God. This is evident, particularly from verse 7th. Fading as grass is, the flower is still more fading; the more fully blown, too, and the more beautiful that it is, the sooner will it fade; and, expressive as the former figure is of the perishing character of humanity, the latter

is still more significant.—The expression, “the Spirit of the Lord,” may mean the wind of the Lord, which may be understood as a Hebraism for a strong wind, one, that is, by which grass is destroyed; or rather the breath of the Lord, indicating that it is by his decree that men die, and particularly descriptive of the final destruction of his enemies, which is often represented in similar language, expressive of the ease with which the work of judgment will be executed: “With the breath of his lips will he slay the wicked.”

9. *O Zion, that bringest good tidings (or, O thou that tellest good tidings to Zion), get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings (or, O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem), lift up thy voice with strength: lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!*

After the foregoing prediction of the removal of Israel's evils, the coming of Christ their King in glory, and the downfall of their enemies, as implied in the proclamation of the frailty of all flesh, the command is given to Zion to proclaim to the whole of Judea the glad tidings of the coming of the Lord. Here the great source of comfort foretold in verses 3-5 is represented as being realized—the Lord is represented as come—as to be beheld in Jerusalem. According to the marginal, which is the better supported and more generally received reading, it is not Jerusalem which is called on to address the other cities of Judah, but another party, one who brings good tidings, who is called on to address both Jerusalem and the other cities of Judah: “Thou that tellest good tidings to Zion.” This view has the support of other passages exactly parallel. Thus: “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice,” lii. 7, 8; “Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion; for, lo, I will

dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord," Zech. ii. 10. According to this view, the text, in its matter and form, is very similar to the first verse, with the exception that the subject of comfort—the glad tidings—to the Jews, is rather positive than negative,—not the removal of their judgments, but the glory of their king manifested among them. There is similar offering of comfort—there is the same vagueness as to the identity of the comforters, who are called in one of the passages just quoted the watchmen of Israel. The only difficulty in the way is, that the expression "that bringest" is a participle in the feminine gender, which is applicable, if Zion be understood as the party speaking, but not, if others be understood as addressing Zion. Lowth meets the difficulty by saying, that it was customary for females to proclaim glad tidings, as in Ex. xv. 20, 21; others by referring to cases in which official titles and collective nouns have a feminine for a masculine termination.—In the expressions, "get thee up into the mountain," "lift up thy voice with strength," there seems to be reference to the custom of criers going to elevated situations from which the voice has the largest command, and to the exertions made by them in their proclamations, Judges ix. 7.

10, 11. *Behold, the Lord God (or, Adonai Jehovah) will come with strong hand (or, against the strong), and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him (or, recompence for his work). He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young (or, that give suck).*

The character in which the Lord shall appear to Israel—that which will make his coming so gladsome, is here unfolded. He will come with judgment to his and their enemies—he will come against the strong, &c. (margin), and with blessings to his ancient people.<sup>1</sup> These verses

<sup>1</sup> "His work." The noun signifies, 1. work; 2. reward or recompence for work, which is the signification here (margin). The expression "be-



form a summary of what precedes. The same truths are thus expressed in other places: "I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children. I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; and all flesh shall know that I am the Lord, thy Saviour and thy Redeemer," xlix. 25, 26; "Behold, the Lord hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, behold thy salvation cometh; behold his reward is with him," lxii. 11. The nature of his benefits is shown under the comparison of a shepherd's office (11). By this figure the care of Christ over Judah in the kingdom of righteousness is often represented, the language being borrowed from the particular customs of shepherds. Thus it is of restored and converted Judah that it is written: "They shall no more be a prey. I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David. They shall feed in the ways, and their pasture shall be in all high places," Ezek. xxxiv. 22, 23.

12. *Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure (or, a tierce), and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?*

The verses which follow, to the 27th inclusive, form a description of the power and majesty of the Lord. It occurs very naturally in this position. Who is He who is thus to come to overwhelm his enemies, and to bless his people? It is the Omnipotent one, who can execute what he has threatened, and fulfil what he has promised. The description possesses in a high degree that sublimity of style which is so prominent a feature of Isaiah's writings, and especially of the latter part of the book. It is a description which is best left alone in its naked majesty. The picture is drawn by a divine hand, and to touch it fore him," or, "in his presence," is much the same as the previous, "with him."

with a human finger is not to improve but to disfigure it. It is with this as with the works of nature ; to meddle with it is to mar it. It possesses the great characteristic of true sublimity, viz., simplicity: it requires not explanation, it cannot be made simpler. The first point which it notices in the Divine character is power. The Lord holds, measures, weighs the waters, the heavens and the earth, the mountains.—The span denotes the space included by the thumb and middle finger when fully extended. The expression “meting or measuring” implies, that the heavens are to God as insignificant as an object which one can in this way measure, or contain in his grasp ; and the same idea is represented in the other cases. As easily as man can hold or measure any article, does the Almighty hold the waters of the earth, does he measure the globe itself. The passage not only gives a measure of Divine omnipotence, but also of human impotence. However great the achievements of man may be, he can no more imitate Divine power than the infant can hold the ocean in its hand, or grasp the world in its arms.

13, 14. *Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or, being his counsellor (or, man of his counsel), hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him (or, made him understand), and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding (or, understandings)?*

The wisdom of God is next introduced. As if looking down from the infinite height of heaven, in full possession and enjoyment of that knowledge and wisdom which planned and which guides the universe, He is represented not as asking man, the creation of his own fingers, could *he* become His counsellor? could *he* teach Him knowledge? but still more impressively, Who had taught Him? enlarging on the question, and repeating it in very similar terms, in order to give it emphasis according to the Hebrew idiom.—The expression “spirit” cannot here be

understood of the Holy Spirit, there being no allusion to the different persons of the Godhead, the whole description referring to the Deity as one God. The mind of God is the most natural meaning of the word in this case.

15-17. *Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering. All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.*

The infinite superiority of the Almighty over everything created is further expressed by different forcible comparisons. The nations of the world are to him as a drop of water, as the smallest dust, that which is so insignificant as not to disturb the adjusted balance. The isles, in his sight, are not like a large weight which one can with difficulty move, but like a little thing which is lifted without effort. And were an offering commensurate to his majesty to be paid unto him, the forests of the range of Lebanon (16), the goodly cedars, would not furnish wood enough for fuel, nor its herds of cattle enough for sacrifice. The imagery here used is described by Umbreit, quoted by Alexander, as "magnificent: nature the temple; Lebanon the altar; its lordly woods the pile; its countless beasts the sacrifice." As if metaphor were exhausted, and could not go farther than this; as if language failed to describe more specifically the inferiority of every creature to Jehovah, all nations are summarily described no longer as drops of water, or grains of dust, but as nothing, as less than nothing before him (17). How appropriate the exclamation with which Job, in similar despair of expressing fittingly the supremacy of Jehovah, closes his description of the Almighty: "Lo these are parts of his ways, but how little a portion is heard of him; but the thunder of his power who can understand?"

18-20. *To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him? The workman melteth a graven image, and the*

*goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains. He that is so impoverished (or, is poor of oblation) that he hath no oblation chooseth a tree that will not rot : he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, that shall not be moved.*

The description proceeds to ridicule the attempt of representing the Lord by any image, and contrasts with the description given of Him the true God, the idol of the heathen. It narrates first (19), the process of the formation of the idol of the rich man, which is molten and overlaid with gold, and adorned with silver chains ; and next (20), how that of the poor man is fashioned, which is carved from a block of hard wood, not liable to speedy decay : and exposes, in this way, the folly of making wood or stone the representative and substitute of Him who holds everything created in his hand. The clause, "He that is so impoverished that he hath no oblation," is usually understood thus : "He that is so poor that he hath no (better) offering." Alexander renders, "the man impoverished by offering," making the idea to be, that man is so bent on idolatry, that even when he has so impoverished himself by religious gifts that he cannot afford an idol of silver or gold, he procures one of wood or stone.

21-24. *Have ye not known ? have ye not heard ? hath it not been told you from the beginning ? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth ? It is he (or, him) that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers ; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in ; that bringeth the princes to nothing : he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity. Yea, they shall not be planted ; yea, they shall not be sown ; yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth : and he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble.*

The description of God, who he is, and what his works are, is again resumed, after an appeal (21), as to its truth, to the understandings of the Jews, who had had such opportunities of acquainting themselves with God, to whom his character had been so clearly revealed since



the very beginning of their national existence. The description of that God who has no superior and no equal, continues to flow on in the same gushing torrent of grand and unequalled hyperbole. This earth is represented as but his seat (22), and its millions of inhabitants in his sight as but a flock of grasshoppers, and the heavens themselves but as a canopy or tent. The mighty ones of this world, its princes and judges, those most likely to prosper or to resist him, he bringeth to nothing (23). Their chief object, the perpetuation of their race and fame, he disappoints (24). Like trees not planted, like seed not sown, like a trunk (stock) without roots, like stubble before the whirlwind, they wither before the breath of his anger. Although this is a general truth often realized, yet as the whole passage occurs in connexion with Christ's second coming, it may be supposed that there is particular reference here to the national judgments of the last days. In the various allusions to these throughout Scripture, kings and rulers are often singled out as pre-eminent both in their hostility to Christ and their experience of his wrath; and their judgments are often described, as here, in connexion with references to the power and majesty of the Almighty: "In that day the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth;" "The Lord shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath." By the same, or similar comparisons, the last judgments of the Lord, upon the nations of the earth, are often represented: "The day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be as stubble," Mal. iv. 1.

25, 26. *To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names, by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth.*

The description of the Divine character is again interrupted by the question put before in the 18th verse, and now repeated with increased emphasis, "To whom, then, will ye liken me?" and closes with an appeal to contemplate the power of the Almighty as it is seen in the starry firmament, which supplies the most wonderful of all the illustrations furnished by nature, of the power and glory of the Creator. The heavenly bodies he regulates like a host. The language is evidently borrowed from the affairs of military life, the knowledge of the names of the troops by the general, and the mustering of them in military array. As all are known and brought forth and arrayed without the exception of a single soldier, so with the stars: not one faileth. Barnes says in connexion with the clause "he bringeth out their host by number," that the word alludes to the fact that the heavenly bodies seem to be marshalled, or regularly arrayed, as an army; that they keep their place and preserve their order; and are *apparently led on* from the east to the west, like a vast army under a mighty leader.

27. *Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God?*

The application of what had been advanced is now made to the circumstances of Israel. The question, "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, my way is hid from the Lord?" implies, that the nation would give way to the unbelief here implied, and to the complaint here expressed. And no wonder, considering the long duration of her trials, that such thoughts should enter her breast. The same complaint is put into the lips of Israel in other places: "Zion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me," xlix. 14; "Behold, they say, our bones are dried, and our hope is lost," Ezek. xxxvii. 11. But what ground could there be for the complaint of Israel, that her condition was unobserved by God, and that her cause had been passed over by him? If he, who

was the God of Israel, claimed and possessed omnipotence, and exercised it in the arrangement and government of the heavenly host, how much more must he remember and care for his covenanted people.—The word “way” is here used in its common sense of “condition of life.” The word “judgment” is clearly used in the judicial sense of “cause” or “suit.”

28-31. *Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew (or, change) their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.*

The nation is here appealed to if they ought not to know God better than to abandon confidence in him; and again the description bursts forth with fresh rapture, and rises into higher sublimity than ever. His power is such that he cannot weary; his wisdom is such that it cannot be searched out. There is here an answer to Gentile cavilling as well as to Jewish despondency. It is objected, What likelihood is there, after a delay of 1800 years, that the nation shall return to Judea? How much more natural to suppose, that their banishment shall be perpetual, not temporary! How improbable a winding up of the world's drama, that Israel shall be again the favoured nation of the Lord, through whom blessings shall be dispensed to a then ransomed world! The answer of the word of the Lord is, “The Creator fainteth not, neither is weary; there is no searching of his understanding;” “If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith the Lord of hosts,” Zech. viii. 6. —While these and the following are general truths, applicable to the circumstances of Judah and Israel under

all their oppressions, they appear to refer particularly to the period of their final trials. Then at least they will be most signally illustrated. Though they faint and be weary under the burden of their trials, the God of Israel will not. Though the dealings of the Almighty towards them be mysteries, they must yet be wise. He will in his own time appear to help them (29). Although their final judgments shall be such that even their youth, the flower of the nation, shall utterly fail (30); yet when brought by means of them to turn from every human stay, and to look unto the Lord and seek his help, the long lost strength of the nation shall be recovered (31), and will be ever growing, never to be destroyed any more: "Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel: the King of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more," Zeph. iii. 14, 15; "As the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain," lxvi. 22. But the language is general: it is not limited to Israel; it is descriptive of all—of Gentiles also—who shall then wait upon the Lord: "When judgment shall be set in the earth, the isles shall wait for his law."

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## CHAPTER XLI.

THIS chapter, like the previous one, relates to events still future. The former represents the God of Israel in a light calculated to convey encouragement to the nation under all their oppressions past or to come, but having particular reference to those which shall precede the period of their waiting upon the Lord, when they shall have their strength renewed. This describes some parti-



culars regarding their final deliverance ; it presents to them many encouragements and assurances of divine help, and predicts their final prosperity.

1. *Keep silence before me, O islands ; and let the people renew their strength : let them come near, then let them speak : let us come near together to judgment.*

There is here a call to the inhabitants of the isles, or maritime countries, see xi. 11, and to the people—the two together, as in xlix. 1, seeming to embrace the nations of the earth generally—to enter into argument with God. The import of the verse is that of an invitation to men to argue the question which follows, that is, when it is God who propounds it, to give good attention to it. The last clause is translated by Lowth, “Let us enter into solemn debate together,” which appears to be the most suitable translation here of the original, whose meanings are as varied as those of the word “judgment” in English. The same form of address occurs in other instances, as when it is said, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord.”

2. *Who raised up the righteous man (or, righteousness) from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him, and made him rule over kings ? he gave them as dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow.*

The subject of this verse is generally understood to be Cyrus. To this view there is the great objection, that the circumstances of the deliverance of the Jews from Babylon by Cyrus, although in some of the particulars there may be a coincidence with this prophecy, yet do not meet fully and naturally its various statements, requiring in some cases a very strained application, and in others not harmonizing at all. Cyrus, at the head of the Medes and Persians, is not represented in Scripture as coming from the East, but in repeated instances from the North, as in Jer. l. 3. Israel is introduced in connexion with the events predicted here (verse 8), whereas it was only Judah,

or the two tribes, who were connected with the deliverance from Babylon through Cyrus. In the predictions regarding Cyrus about which there can be no dispute, his name is introduced, which is not the case here. Never was such destruction effected by him as is described in this verse. The only nation he destroyed was Babylon. In all other cases his rule was mild. He subdued many others, but only to form alliances with them. The Jews did not attain that eminence after their return from Babylon which is ascribed to them here. In these and other particulars there is no parallel between the circumstances of the deliverance from Babylon and that foretold in this passage. According to the view taken in this exposition of Isaiah, it must be understood of Christ when he comes to redeem Israel. It will appear throughout it that there is a more easy and satisfactory coincidence between the predictions of this chapter and what other Scripture foretells of the future dealings of God with Israel, than between them and the incidents of their deliverance from Babylon. The person introduced is clearly the same as in the following chapter, verses 1st and 6th, and that is clearly Christ. He is represented in the text as a great and successful warrior. It is not necessary, however, to suppose from the language employed that Christ himself is to act personally in punishing his enemies. The elements of nature are often said to form one of his instruments in his judgment of the nations ; but there may be other instrumentality, whose origin from the east of Judea seems here pointed out. Christ himself is said to fight against his enemies then : " Behold, the day of the Lord cometh. I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle : then shall the Lord go forth and fight against those nations," Zech. xiv. 1-3. In that passage he is represented as the agent in person ; but the clause is qualified and its meaning indicated by the following one,—“ as he fought in the day of battle.” In the past history of Israel,

when they enjoyed the divine favour, he often fought for them : "The Lord is a man of war, was their song ;" but still not directly. He did so, for example, in the cases of the destruction of Pharaoh, of Jericho, of the Ammonites and Moabites, and those of Mount Seir, when "the Lord set ambushments against them when they threatened Jehoshaphat, so that they fell on each other and perished," 2 Chron. xx. 23. It may be in a similar sense that Christ is represented as coming from the East to judge his enemies ; that is, he will bring some instrumentality from that quarter, by means of which he will effect their overthrow. This may be all that is intended. What that instrumentality may be is not revealed, and cannot, therefore, be known ; but at the end, this prediction, like every other, will not lie. It is singular that the opinion prevailed among the Jews that a power would arrive from the East which would destroy many nations. What is here said coincides to the letter with what is elsewhere revealed of the dealings of Christ with guilty nations. To him pre-eminently, but not strictly to Cyrus, does the character of righteous pertain. Nations and kings are often said to experience his vengeance ; and such figures as those of dust and stubble are constantly employed in the description of it : "Behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do mischief, shall be stubble." The expression "called him to his foot," appears to be equivalent to calling him to attend upon him, or to be his servant, a familiar title of Christ.

3. *He pursued them, and passed safely (or, in peace) ; even by the way that he had not gone with his feet.*

The rapid and easy destruction of the enemies of the Lord is then noticed. The last clause is left so undetermined that its import can be known only by its accomplishment. This mystery about a particular clause, which, however, presents as great a difficulty in the way of its application

to Cyrus as to Christ, forms no objection to the soundness of a view which refers it to future events, as in this case much that is mysterious may be expected until the day shall declare it ; while, on the other hand, a difficulty in applying any passage in a prophecy to past events, militates much against such an application of it, and is a strong reason for seeking its accomplishment in events still future. The last clause is translated by Alexander, "a path with his feet he shall not go," understanding this as descriptive of the swiftness of his motions, as flying rather than walking on foot.

4. *Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning ? I the Lord, the first, and with the last ; I am he.*

By whatever instrumentality the destruction of sinful nations may be effected, it will be the Lord's doing. The solemn allusion to his own eternity here made is much more natural and appropriate when understood of events that concern the whole race of man, and of the time when sin shall be eradicated from the earth and the reign of Christ be established, than of an event, the destruction of Babylon namely, which was to take place a little more than 100 years after the date of the prophecy, which affected merely a fraction of the human race, and that not more than hundreds of other catastrophes—one whose peculiarity, indeed, was, that it bore so little the character of a catastrophe—and which had no peculiar bearing on the glory of the Saviour. This reference to the eternity of God is introduced only on occasions of peculiar solemnity, Rev. i. 27 ; xxii. 13 ; and this circumstance also argues against Cyrus being the party to whom the passage points.

5. *The isles saw it, and feared ; the ends of the earth were afraid, drew near, and came.*

A feature of these doings of the Lord, common to them with no other event, but often said to characterize the



coming of Christ to establish his kingdom, is, that they will awe and attract the whole inhabitants of the world: "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the heathen. I will be exalted in the earth."

6, 7. *They helped every one his neighbour; and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage (or, Be strong). So the carpenter encouraged the goldsmith (or, founder), and he that smootheth with the hammer him that smote (or, the smiting) the anvil, saying, It is ready for the soldering (or, saying of the soder, It is good): and he fastened it with nails, that it should not be moved.*

Then there will be a combination of the nations of the world against the Messiah and his covenanted people: "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord." What follows (7) may relate to the misplaced confidence of the nations in turning to their idols for help; or rather, it represents, by a figure expressive of haste and of mutual co-operation, and of plans concocted and ready for execution, that the schemes and combinations of the nations united against Jerusalem, will be all but perfect, will be on the point of being carried out, like the workmanship that is ready for the soldering, when their devices will be crushed. The cup of anticipated vengeance will be at their lips when it shall be dashed in pieces. This truth is not left to rest on the import of a metaphor; it is elsewhere clearly announced. The enemies of Judah shall be in the siege against Jerusalem. They shall reach even to the neck. The nation shall be left as a beacon on the top of a mountain.

8, 9. *But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away.*

When Israel shall be thus on the point of annihilation, the Lord will remember—will interfere for those who are still beloved for the fathers' sake. In circumstances which

would excite the thought that he had forgotten them, he will say to them, "I have chosen you, and not cast you off" (9). The clause of the verse which represents the taking of Israel from the ends of the earth, and the calling therefrom the chief men thereof, is clearly much more applicable to their position at the time here understood, than to their history at the close of the Babylonish captivity. Then the Lord will gather them out of all nations whither he has driven them: "I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and I will bring you into your own land," Ezek. xxxvi. 24. The second characteristic, that of their being numbered among the chief men of the earth, is one which the nation is rapidly assuming. It is well known that almost every European Government is debtor to the Jews, and that their vast wealth is daily opening a way for them to influence and honour. In so far as gold can give the title—and what alone goes so far in this "age of gold, but not golden age?"—many are already among the chief men of the earth. In other respects also, their position in the world has of late been rising with great rapidity. "In all the public places of education, in all the public offices in Germany, throughout Prussia especially, also in Austria, and extending as far as into Russia, the movement is very wonderful among them; so that there is no Court in continental Europe—in Berlin, Vienna, Petersburg, also in Turin in Sardinia—none of these Courts are without some one or more Jews connected with the public offices and the Government of these countries. This is a remarkable and extraordinary change. In Germany, all the leading newspapers are under the power and government of Jews. The Jews have taken part in the recent political movements throughout Germany."—*Speech of the Rev. Ridley Herschell at Evangelical Alliance, Glasgow; Witness, October 13, 1849.*—"Chief men" is generally translated "extremities," as equivalent with the other ex-

pression, "the ends of the earth." This, however, is preferred chiefly for the sake of the parallelism. The etymology is obscure. In Exodus xxiv. 11, it is translated "nobles."

10-14. *Fear thou not ; for I am with thee ; be not dismayed ; for I am thy God : I will strengthen thee ; yea, I will help thee ; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded : they shall be as nothing ; and they that strive with thee (or, the men of thy strife) shall perish. Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, even them that contended with thee (or, the men of thy contention) : they that war against thee (or, the men of thy war) shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought. For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not ; I will help thee. Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men (or, few men) of Israel ; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.*

The language of the 10th verse, which is renewed in the 13th and 14th verses, describes the fears and the deliverances of Israel at last, when all nations shall be gathered against Jerusalem. It is in connexion with the same period that it is said, "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength ;" "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee," xliii. 2 ; "I, even I, am he that comforteth you : who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass," li. 12 ; "The heavens and the earth shall shake, but the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel," Joel iii. 16.—"The right hand of my righteousness," is equivalent with "my just or righteous right hand." The rectitude of the divine dealings in making good every promise to the seed of Abraham, and in punishing the sinful nations of the earth, is often insisted on ; see i. 27. This soothing of Israel's fears and assurance of Divine help, is followed (11, 12) by a prediction of the annihilation of those enemies of whom they shall be afraid. It is they who are said to

become as dust and as stubble before the power of Christ. Similar forcible language is in constant use to express the completeness of their destruction. They will be as chaff before the wind, it is written—as down before the whirlwind—as a stone beneath the hammer—as a sheaf before the torch—as wood upon the fire. As in these cases, when one looks for the chaff after the wind, for the sheaf after the burning, there is nothing left, or at best but ashes, so will it be with the enemies of the Lord and of Israel at last. They shall be as nothing; when sought for, they will not be found. The condition of the nation, when thus encouraged with the assurance of their enemies' overthrow, is one in which such an assurance will be much needed, and which will show that the glory will be the Lord's. It will be in the moment of their utmost extremity that deliverance will come, see verse 7—when they will be enfeebled and crushed like the worm (14)—when they will be few in numbers<sup>1</sup> (margin).—The expression “worm” may only designate the general insignificance and unworthiness of mankind, as in Job xxv. 6. Taken, however, in connexion with the following clause—the few men of Israel—it seems to contain an allusion to their reduced condition.—“I will hold thy right hand.” This expression represents, by a familiar action, the giving of help.

15, 16. *Behold, I will make thee a new sharp thrashing instrument having teeth (or, mouths): thou shalt thrash the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff. Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel.*

Though so reduced, God will yet make Israel the in-

<sup>1</sup> מְעַטִּים. This word signifies men, but including the idea of fewness, Gen. xxxvi. 30. By some it is understood to be the plural of מָת, dead, which would imply still more strongly the feebleness of the nation, that they will be as good as dead.



strument of the destruction of their enemies—with that worm will he thrash the mountains. The figurative allusions are to the modes of thrashing and winnowing grain in the East—the former being effected by crushing the sheaves by a machine of wood furnished with iron teeth, or by another made of a number of rough rollers, both being drawn by oxen; the latter by throwing the grain into the air, and thus exposing the chaff to a current of wind, by which it was blown away. The idea of thrashing and winnowing mountains, and that, too, by a worm, is very bold. The instrumentality of Israel in the infliction of the judgments of heaven upon the nations of the world, here represented by mountains, is often asserted. The very same figure is employed in another instance, in reference to the same events, “Arise and thrash, O daughter of Zion: for I will make thine horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass (in allusion to the dragging of the thrashing machine by cattle): and thou shalt beat in pieces many people,” Micah iv. 13. It is Jerusalem that is said to be the cup of trembling, the burdensome stone, the torch to all the nations that shall be gathered against her, Zech. xii. The conversion of the nation to God will follow or accompany these doings—they will then rejoice in him (16). The signal deliverance then vouchsafed to Israel will be blessed for the removal of the veil from their eyes at last. These events are often represented as cause and effect. Thus in Zech. xii. there is detailed the destruction of the nations by Jerusalem, and the defence of her by the Lord. This is followed by the outpouring of the Spirit upon them, and then that fountain of the Redeemer’s blood, which has hitherto been to them a fountain sealed, is opened.

17-20. *When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a*

*pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah-tree, and the myrtle, and the oil-tree; I will set in the desert the fir-tree, and the pine, and the box-tree together: that they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together, that the hand of the Lord hath done this, and the Holy One of Israel hath created it.*

Another consequent, or concomitant, of the foregoing events, is the restored fertility of the land. That this description is to be understood literally, and not of spiritual blessings, which are often represented by water, although these will then also be bestowed, appears from the 19th verse, which will not bear such an application. The same connexion of events occurs often in other places. Thus, in xxxv. 4-7, there are foretold in succession the vengeance of the Jewish nation on their enemies—their own deliverance—their conversion—and the fertility of the land. The passage teaches that, in place of the drought and barrenness which have long marked the land, there will be abundant water and luxuriant vegetation. Then “there shall be upon every high mountain and upon every high hill rivers and streams of waters in the day of the great slaughter;” “The parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water.” So marvellous will be the divine agency in clothing the land with fertility, that the hand of God in it will be seen and understood.—The expression, “hath created it,” is significant. The change wrought on the face of the land will be such that it is called a creation. The verse appears to describe the impression made by the restored fertility of the country, not on the Jews alone, but on men generally. This, along with the other interferences made in behalf of Israel, will be blessed for enlightening and converting the world (20). There is, as might be expected, a difficulty in determining what trees in some of the cases are here intended. By the shittah-tree is generally understood the acacia, by the oil-tree the olive, by the fir-tree the cypress. As to what are intended

by the pine and the box-tree, great diversity of opinion exists.

21-24. *Produce your cause (or, cause to come near), saith the Lord ; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth, and shew us what shall happen : let them shew the former things, what they be, that we may consider (or, set our heart upon) them, and know the latter end of them ; or declare us things for to come. Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods (or, Elohim) : yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together. Behold, ye are of nothing (or, worse than nothing), and your work of nought (or, worse than of a viper) : an abomination is he that chooseth you.*

In these verses the Almighty is represented as addressing men, and asking them to show what was to come, referring apparently to the momentous events that he was about to unfold. The passage is one of the most sublime irony, a form of speech not often adopted by God, one very unlike that in which he usually addresses his creatures in his word, but on that account all the more startling when he does adopt it. That men generally are addressed here, as in verse 1st, appears from a parallel passage in the 43d chapter, verse 9, where it is written, "Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and show us former things?" The Almighty is represented as inviting men to argument (21); what he means appears from what follows. He calls on them, if they could show him what was to happen, both to declare what the fulfilment of former things, or past predictions, would be, and also to declare new predictions. The expression "former things" is so general, that from this passage alone its signification cannot be determined with precision; but it occurs no fewer than six times in the course of a few chapters, and all in the same connexion, in xlii. 9; xliii. 9, 18; xlv. 9; xlviii. 3; and in all these places the context shows that it signifies prophecies announced in former ages. Thus, in xlii. 9, where the passage occurs in connexion with events that are to mark the return of the

Lord to take his kingdom, we read, "Behold the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth, I tell you of them." This last clause also points out the meaning of the expression in the text, "declare us things for to come." The demand made in verse 22 is repeated in verse 23; and the "all flesh" upon whom the veil will then be, are called on—in reference to the events that are to happen in the last days—to tell the issue of past events revealed before and then about to be fulfilled, and also to declare other events not then revealed. Nay, they are invited to do something, to do anything whatever, good or bad, whereby they could prove their independence of the Almighty—to cause him, if they could, to be dismayed. The object of the whole passage seems to be the same as that of the first four verses of the chapter, viz., to bring out the nothingness of man in comparison with God, as that will be illustrated in the events of the latter days. Even the fulfilment of all that is revealed will be effected in a way which will exceed all conceptions of what can be formed of it now; and as if even the predicting of all that will be accomplished would be too much for faith to grasp, things not now revealed will be done, xlii. 9; what it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive even with the aid of prophecy, will then be witnessed. In connexion with what will then be wrought, how complete the contrast, so forcibly put in this passage, between the ignorance of man and the omniscience of God. That the lesson intended to be taught here is to this effect, appears from the next verse (24), in which, without any circumlocution, and without any figure, the guilty nations of the last days—those on whom, when God shall look down, he will find every one of them gone back, altogether become filthy, Ps. liii.—are described in their true colours as worse than nothing (margin), and all that choose them an abomination to him.



25. *I have raised up one from the north, and he shall come : from the rising of the sun shall he call upon my name ; and he shall come upon princes as upon mortar, and as the potter treadeth clay.*

In this verse, and in others that follow, God gives the answer that it is implied men will be unable to give. He declares what he would do. One would appear, before whom those whom he addresses, whose ignorance he exposes, whose odious self-confidence he denounces,—even the princes among them would be as mortar and clay. This doubtless refers to the national judgments of the enemies of God in the terrible day of the Lord, among whom are included kings and judges of the earth : “ Mine enemy shall be trodden down as the mire of the streets,” Micah vii. 10. The minister of the divine judgments who is introduced here is evidently the same as in the 2d and 27th verses, and in the 1st and 6th verses of the chapter following, viz., Christ, or what is equivalent, the agents by whom he will effect the final overthrow of his enemies. Before, (verse 2,) the power by which this will be accomplished is represented as arising from the east of Judea, here from the north, as in other passages, for example, “ I will remove far off from you the northern army,” Joel ii. 20, and also from the rising of the sun, or the east, which seems to imply that from both quarters will come the instruments which Christ shall use for effecting his own purposes in the overthrow of his enemies.

26. *Who hath declared from the beginning, that we may know ? and beforetime, that we may say, He is righteous ? yea, there is none that sheweth ; yea, there is none that declareth ; yea, there is none that heareth your words.*

The tone of irony is here resumed. The Almighty is represented as again addressing the nations of the earth at last to this effect, Have any of you foretold these events ? He replies that they cannot—they are silent—no one hears their reply. The expression “ He is right,” is in the original only, “ righteous, or right.” It may be considered the parallel of the preceding clause, “ that we

may know," when the meaning will be, that we may say it is right or true.

27. *The first shall say to Zion, Behold, behold them : and I will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings.*

But while those who are addressed could foretell nothing, the Almighty had been the first to declare them to his ancient people—to say of the events described, Behold them ; and to bring to them one who would be their deliverer from all their enemies, and the restorer of the long-lost favour of the God of Israel. Who the bearer of good tidings may be, is not stated, as in other places : see chap. xl. 1. Here it appears to signify the Redeemer, who shall then come to Zion, whose character and work are described in the following chapter. The expression, "The first shall say to Zion," is literally, "first to Zion," that is, (I) first (say) to Zion. Alexander paraphrases thus :—"I am the first to say to Zion, Behold them."

28, 29. *For I beheld, and there was no man ; even among them, and there was no counsellor, that, when I asked of them, could answer (or, return) a word. Behold, they are all vanity ; their works are nothing : their molten images are wind and confusion.*

These concluding verses are uttered in the tone of pity and sadness. Language parallel to the former occurs in repeated instances, and in such connexion as to show the meaning more clearly than here, lix. 16, lxiii. 5. The state of the nations in their inability to produce one who could reply to the Almighty, and in their nothingness (29) and trust in idols, which are also nothing, represents their utter alienation from him.—The expression "I beheld," corresponds with that part of a parallel passage descriptive of the universal depravity of man, when the earth shall be purged a second time by judgment as it was before by the deluge, where it is said, "God looked down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God," Ps. liii. In the parallel passages this utter corruption is

described as the cause of their overwhelming judgments :  
 “ He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor ; therefore his arm brought salvation unto him . . . . He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak. According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompence to his enemies,” lix. 16-18.

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## CHAPTER XLII.

IN this chapter there is given a description of the character of that Saviour of Israel who had been foretold in the previous chapters, with reference both to his first and second coming (1-4). Next, the blessed effects produced by his final reign on earth (5-16). And finally, the urgent necessity that will exist for his appearing, in the sins and oppressions of his people Israel, over whom he will specially reign (17-25).

1. *Behold my servant, whom I uphold ; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth : I have put my Spirit upon him ; he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.*

The description with which the chapter opens applies certainly to Christ. It is spoken of him in his assumed and adopted character as the Redeemer of the world. The whole passage is applied to our Saviour by Matthew xii. 1-21 ; and the individual expressions in it are also so applied both in the Old and New Testaments. As man he was the servant of the Father—he took on him the form of a servant—he came to do the Father’s will. As such he was upheld by the Father, through the power of that Spirit who was given him not by measure. It was by the power of the Holy Ghost that he was conceived : “ The

Holy Ghost shall come upon thee" (Mary);—and a clean thing was brought out of an unclean. It was by the Spirit that he was furnished with the graces which he needed for his mediatorial office, when, at his consecration to that office at the river Jordan, the Spirit descended on him like a dove. It was the Spirit who carried him through that arduous work which he had undertaken, and who did not forsake him until he could say of it, It is finished: "Through the Eternal Spirit he offered himself without spot to God." It was by the Spirit that he was raised from the dead: "He was put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit."—The expression "judgment," which has so varied significations, i. 21, appears here to denote justice, righteousness; or more generally, and as it is usually understood in this passage, the religion of Christ as a whole. It would be quite in harmony with other prophecies to understand it, in the popular sense of the word, of judicial visitations, in reference to the last national judgments. As in such passages as the following: "The Lord cometh: he cometh to judge the earth; he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth." In that case the prophet would be understood as including in his description of the Redeemer his character at his first coming when he sought to win the hearts of men by love, and also his character at his second coming, when he shall reign by power. But as it is his character at his first coming that is clearly the subject of most of the passage, and as it is the signification of righteousness or religion which is most suitable in the 4th verse, it preserves better the harmony of the passage to understand it here in this signification. The clause "he shall bring forth," or more literally, "he shall cause to go forth," is thus a prediction of the extension of Christ's kingdom.

*2-4. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking (or,*



*dimly burning) flax shall he not quench (or, quench it) : he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged (or, broken), till he have set judgment in the earth : and the isles shall wait for his law.*

Before he could establish his kingdom of righteousness in the earth, as is foretold in the last of these verses, his humiliation must be undergone. Accordingly, his character in that condition, his character as he was on earth, is first described. How faithful a portrait this is of the Redeemer is attested by every part of his gentle, and peaceful, and harmless life. In it there is seen at once the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.—The import of the expression “unto truth,”<sup>1</sup> is not very clear. Truth will be the means by which religion will be established in the world, it will be the end for which it will be established, and it will be the character of it when established. The version given in Matthew, viz., “unto victory,” contains the spirit if not the letter of the original. The ascendancy of truth in the world is the victory over Satan, the father of lies. This object of Christ will not, however, be effected easily or speedily. The progress of righteousness in the world is difficult and slow. Still the Redeemer will persevere with it (4) until it is finally and forever established. It is not implied by this, however, that the erection of the kingdom of righteousness among men will be effected by no other means than those now in use. When, at its rate of progress hitherto, would it ever cover the earth? See xxv. 7.—In point of time these verses appear to be a continuation of the period reached in the previous verse,—to refer particularly to the hour when the isles shall wait for the law of the Lord, and the establishment of his kingdom be completed.

5-7. *Thus saith God the Lord, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out ; he that spread forth the earth, and that which*

<sup>1</sup> לְאֵמֶת. The significations of the preposition לְ are very various. Which of the paraphrases given above may express its exact import it is impossible to determine. They are *in fact* all alike true.

*cometh out of it ; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein ; I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles ; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house.*

The form of the prophecy is here altered. Instead of the Almighty speaking of Christ, as before, he is now represented as speaking to him. The Father appears giving to the Son his high commission to carry redemption to a fallen world—to restore that lost jewel to the crown of the Eternal One. He prefaces his charge with a declaration of his own omnipotence (5), as if for the encouragement of the *man* Christ Jesus ; assuring him that the cause he had undertaken was a righteous one (6) ; that he would ever experience the Father's care and keeping, and that in him all nations, both Jew and Gentile, would be blessed, and light and liberty be given to the blind and captive sons of men. This, which is the natural condition of the human race, will be the character of the world when Christ shall set up his kingdom. The veil will be upon the face of all nations.—The expression “in righteousness,” may denote that righteousness will be a feature of the scheme in its origin, or in its objects, or in its execution, or in its results, or rather, in all. The past tense of the verb here, “I have called thee,” while the others are future, “I will hold thine hand,” may have reference to the eternal purpose of God, in ordaining from the beginning Christ as the Redeemer of the world. By “the people” the Jews are clearly meant, as in the parallel passage in xlix. 8, in which it is applied to that nation. As the blessings of the covenant of Israel in those days, when the Lord will make a new covenant with them, will centre in Christ and will be dispensed by him, just as the blessings of the sun centre in it and are dispensed by it, therefore Christ is himself called the covenant, just as afterwards he is called Light.

8, 9. *I am the Lord ; that is my name : and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images. Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare : before they spring forth I tell you of them.*

The deliverance of all flesh from the darkness and bondage of nature was not effected at Christ's first coming, has not been effected yet. But it will be effected, for the Lord (8) (in the original, Jehovah, or, I am, implying self-existence and eternity, the only true God therefore) will not always, or will not at the time referred to, suffer idols to usurp his place, and receive his praise. He appeals to evidence of his being what he declared himself to be—of the truth of what he foretold, in the circumstance of the fulfilment of all past predictions, and in the certain accomplishment of new predictions, although, at the time of their being declared there should be no more sign of their taking place than there is appearance of the seed before it spring (9). If all prophecies bearing on past events have been accomplished, will not those bearing on future events be as certainly accomplished? And if the predictions bearing on Israel's past history have received a literal fulfilment, will not the fulfilment of those bearing on her future history be also as literally accomplished? The literality of the past forms sufficient data for the literality of the future. It does not appear from what point of prophetic history Jehovah here speaks; and it is of no consequence to determine it, if, as it seems, the object of the verse is to prove his supremacy over idols.

10-12. *Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein (or, the fulness thereof); the isles, and the inhabitants thereof. Let the wilderness and the cities thereof, lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar doth inhabit: let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains. Let them give glory unto the Lord, and declare his praise in the islands.*

The accomplishment of the object of Christ's mediatorial office is foretold in these verses, which clearly de-

scribe the state of the world subsequent to the period of national judgments, and the pouring out of the Spirit upon all flesh—the period when the new song, the song of Moses and of the Lamb, shall be sung. In previous parts of Isaiah there are put into the lips of the Jews their songs of thanksgiving and praise after their re-establishment in Judea, and their conversion to the faith of Christ, as in chapters xii. xxv. ; but in this instance the reference is to that in which all flesh shall join, from the ends of the earth, from the sea, from the isles, from the wilderness. That particular maritime powers and particular countries are here intended, there is little doubt, these being so often specified in a similar connexion, but what these kingdoms are is left undetermined. Some of the parallel passages are the following: “They shall cry aloud from the sea, Glorify ye the Lord in the isles of the sea,” xxiv. 15 ; “The Lord will be terrible unto them: and men shall worship him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the heathen,” Zeph. ii. 11. Even the most desolate places, the wilderness, the inhabitants of the rock, shall take up the song of praise: “The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them,” xxxv. 1 ; “All the flocks of Kedar (in Arabia) shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth (also in Arabia) shall minister unto thee: they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar,” lx. 7. There will be one universal hymn of praise when all the ends of the earth shall have seen the salvation of the Lord.

13-15. *The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail (or, behave himself mightily) against his enemies. I have long time holden my peace; I have been still, and refrained myself: now will I cry like a travailing woman; I will destroy and devour (or, swallow, or, sup up) at once. I will make waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbs; and I will make the rivers islands, and I will dry up the pools.*

That which will form the subject of praise, and which



will precede it, viz., the overthrow of the enemies of God, is now described. The Lord is represented as a warrior going forth to conquest.<sup>1</sup> Similar language is often applied to him in connexion with his final punishment of the nations of the earth; see xli. 2: "The Lord shall fight against those nations;" "I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury;" "The Lord shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem." His vengeance long restrained, like a pent-up stream, will be all the more terrible when it does burst forth. It will be after great long-suffering, after long restraint of his fury (14), that he will speak in judgment; see xviii. 4. The figure employed in the end of the verse expresses the suddenness with which the terrible day of the Lord will burst upon the world, with nothing before to indicate coming judgments, while these are all the while ripening—the cup of fury all the while filling—on account of accumulating guilt, until at last it overflows and is emptied out. The Lord will not be alway sowing. But however reluctant to commence the work of national judgment, he will not be slow in executing it;<sup>2</sup> see xxvi. 20. The desolation which his judgments would produce in the places where they would be inflicted is then described (15). The land will share in the judgments of that great day: "The day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon all high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up," ii. 14; "I beheld, and lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the Lord, and by his fierce anger," Jer. iv. 26. Judgments on the people, which include the flame of a devouring fire, and tempest, and hailstones, xxx. 30, necessarily imply

<sup>1</sup> Jealousy. The original signifies zeal, ardour, then jealousy, also anger, indignation. It is in this last sense that it occurs in the text.

<sup>2</sup> "I will destroy and devour at once." The Hebrew verbs נָשַׁם and נָשַׁף are synonymous, and signify, properly, to breathe hard, as is caused by excitement or violent exertion.

such calamities on the land as the destruction of all cultivation, and the drying up of all streams.<sup>1</sup>

16, 17. *And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not ; I will lead them in paths that they have not known : I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight (or, into straightness). These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them. They shall be turned back, they shall be greatly ashamed, that trust in graven images, that say to the molten images, Ye are our gods (or, Elohi).*

The care of the Lord of his people Israel will then be exemplified in other ways besides in the overthrow of their enemies. The particular act intended in the first of these clauses, if there be any particular act intended, does not seem to be revealed in other Scripture, and cannot therefore be determined. It seems to teach that the manner of Israel's recovery from their wanderings and from their sins will be different from what they will be looking for. Here, as in other places, their conversion is represented as accompanying the destruction of their oppressors. Thus we read, "Your God will come with vengeance, even your God with a recompence.... Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened," xxxv. 4, 9. While such blessings will be the portion of Israel, defeat and confusion will be the portion of their idolatrous foes (17) : "They shall be ashamed and confounded, all of them ; they shall go to confusion together that are makers of idols ; but Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation," xlviii. 16, 17.

18-20. *Hear, ye deaf ; and look, ye blind, that ye may see. Who is blind, but my servant ? or deaf, as my messenger that I sent ? who is blind as he that is perfect, and blind as the Lord's servant ? Seeing many things, but thou observest not ; opening the ears, but he heareth not.*

These verses contain an appeal to the Jewish nation to cease from their indifference to the voice of God, and de-

<sup>1</sup> "Make the rivers islands," literally, dry lands. The first signification of the original is dry land, next island, which is dry land in contrast to the surrounding water.

scribe the inveteracy of their delusions. The language, at least that of the 19th verse, is evidently ironical, else how could the blind be called the Lord's servants? how could they be called perfect? Their blindness is contrasted with their first privileges, or with their professions; and that the professions of the nation have been as high as their delusions have been deep, is attested by all their history. Their pretensions as the perfect servants and privileged favourites of the Almighty, after they have forfeited their prerogatives, show the extent of their blindness. Their past prerogatives have proved in some measure the source of their delusions, and have brought the veil upon their eyes. Hence the two are placed in contrast. What is said here, while true in all the latter ages of their history, appears, from the contextual connexion, to relate particularly to a period still future, implying that this blindness will be persevered in to the last, notwithstanding the occurrence of events the best fitted to dispel it. The chief objection to applying the passage to the Jews is in this use of the word "messenger." It is true that the expression is not so applied in any other place; but this alone is no objection; and, in fact, without any stretch of the meaning of the word, it is applicable to Israel as the channel by which the knowledge of all spiritual blessings has come to man. When the fact is, that "salvation is of the Jews," the character of being the messenger sent to the world by God is not at all inapplicable. It was through Jewish prophets and apostles, and so forth—it was through a Saviour who was a Jew, that it was first revealed, and it will be through that race that it will be effectually promulgated to the ends of the earth, when the law shall go forth from mount Zion, and the receiving of them shall be life to the Gentiles.

21-25. *The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make it (or, him) honourable. But this is a people robbed and spoiled; they are all of them snared in holes (or, in*

*snaring all the young men of them), and they are hid in prison-houses : they are for a prey, and none delivereth ; for a spoil (or, a treading), and none saith, Restore. Who among you will give ear to this ? who will hearken, and hear for the time to come (or, for the after time) ? Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers ? did not the Lord, he against whom we have sinned ? for they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law. Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle : and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not ; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart.*

The first of these verses has occasioned much diversity of opinion, not, however, from any exegetical obscurity, but from the difficulty of its application in its particular position. The popular view of it, which refers it to the righteousness wrought out by Christ for his children by his suffering and serving for them, is quite unsupported by the context in which there is no allusion to the atonement of Christ, and is altogether out of place. The previous context describes the spiritual blindness of the Jewish nation, the subsequent context describes their punishment. The former of these is national, judicial, vi. 10, greater, apparently, than the natural blindness of man, inflicted for national sin. The latter is also national, judicial, excessive, inflicted also, both in what is past and what is to come, for national sin. Both in what precedes and in what follows this passage—both in the national blindness and in the national sufferings of the Jewish nation, the two together constituting their national punishment, God has acted and will act judicially ; and in what he has done—and this appears to be the import of the verse—he has acted in righteousness, that is, in accordance with the demands of Divine justice ; he has magnified and exalted his own law, proving to all ages, by the sufferings of the people most dear to him, who are still beloved for their fathers' sake, that its sacred demands must be satisfied ; and with this manifestation of his righteousness he is well pleased. The law of God was magnified most of



all when the Son left the throne of heaven to satisfy its claims against man. His death was the highest tribute of all to its sacredness; the proudest of all its trophies was the cross on Calvary; and therefore Christ was the beloved Son in whom the Father was well pleased, because by him that law was so honoured. And in like manner, the judgments inflicted on his covenanted people furnish most striking testimony to the sacredness of the law of God; and although, in regard to their blindness and sufferings, though the seed of Abraham his friend, his language was, "How can I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? mine heart is turned within me"—although such was his love to that guilty race, yet because his righteousness was vindicated and his law magnified by their judgments, is he said to be well pleased. This view of the bearing of the passage is supported by what follows; for after a picture, whose faithfulness all history attests, of the sufferings of the Jews as a people robbed and spoiled (22), the lesson taught by their troubles is applied (23), "Who among you will give ear to this?"—and how lost has it been upon Israel, and how lost is it still, —and the bearing of these troubles on the law of God shown (24, 25). The Lord had done it on account of their sins. For these it was that the fury of the Lord came upon the nation, which, terrible as it has been, they have not yet laid to heart. So it is written: "Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not; yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, and he knoweth it not. They do not return to the Lord their God, nor seek him for all this," Hos. vii. 9, 10. The change of tense in the 21st verse does not at all interfere with the view given of it above. In the first clause, the honour done to the law is represented as done; in the other, it is represented as to be done: but such changes of the tense are of constant occurrence. A peculiarity of the degradation of the Jews, mentioned in the 22d verse, is worthy of notice.

Not only is it predicted of them that they would be robbed, spoiled, and imprisoned, and that for them there would arise no earthly deliverer, but that not even a voice would be lifted up in their behalf. How differently have other nations met their doom ! Where is the kingdom which hath perished by the arm of unrighteous oppression, without exciting hostility, always remonstrance, against the tyrant,—without receiving, if not the aid, at least the sympathy, of other powers ? But of Israel it was foretold, and it has been fulfilled, that when she would become a spoil, none would say, Restore : “ Who shall have pity upon thee, O Jerusalem ? or who shall bemoan thee ? or who shall go aside to ask how thou doest ? ” In these verses the reference is clearly to the judgments of the Jews as a whole, both past and to come. They all together illustrate the divine righteousness, and magnify the divine law.

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## CHAPTER XLIII.

THIS chapter continues the same subjects as several previous chapters. After declaring, in the close of the last, how the sufferings of the Jewish nation were the deserved penalty of their crimes, and magnified the law of God, the prophecy proceeds to show that their trials would terminate, and Israel would yet be blessed ; representing the omnipotence of that God who had adopted them as his people ; reminding them of the deliverances wrought for them in past ages, which were yet but the earnest of greater blessings, and concluding with a complaint of their ingratitude and sin, which, however, Divine grace was ready to pardon, but which was the cause of all their evils.

1. *But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not : for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name ; thou art mine.*

Although punished as they have been, as previously described, yet Israel is here represented as being addressed in the language of encouragement and endearment, as, in their national character, the workmanship and people of God ; and their deliverance from all their evils is described as accomplished. The import of the expression " I have redeemed thee," is given in the 3d verse, or it may be used in the general sense of the deliverance of Israel from their trials. The expression " I have called thee by thy name," implies reconciliation. In the case of an inferior, from whom there has been estrangement, as is the case with Israel, to call by name indicates returned kindness. The same expression is applied to Cyrus, xlv. 3 ; to Bezaleel, Ex. xxxi. 2, where it denotes selection to a particular duty.

2-4. *When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee ; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee : when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt ; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour : I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Saba for thee. Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee : therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life (or, person).*

The prediction of a time coming when the Lord would address Israel in the language of the previous verse, is followed by an assurance of his presence with her in the day of trial. Water and fire are common scriptural symbols of trouble. In all the past calamities of the nation God has so far been with her as to have brought her through them, not unscathed certainly, but still undestroyed, although a tithe of her judgments would have swept other nations from the earth. Like the three men in the furnace who survived it, while those who cast them in were caught by the flame wafted aside by the

breeze which was intended for others, and consumed, Israel still preserves her national existence, while the more ancient nations that oppressed her have almost or altogether disappeared. There may be allusion, however, to the period of universal national judgments in the promise here made, for similar assurances are given to Israel in connexion with the trials of the last days. Thus, "Fear thou not, I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel," xli. 14. In a psalm which agrees well in its leading subjects with a song to be sung by Israel after their last calamities are over, they are represented as saying, "We went through fire and through water, but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place," lxvi. 12; "I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them," Zech. xiii. 9. The assurance of his protection, which the Lord is said to give, is, that he stood to them in a relation which was shared in by no other nation (3). He was their God, the Holy One of Israel. A circumstance illustrative of the relationship and favour of God to Israel is then mentioned: He had redeemed her by giving Egypt, &c., for her ransom. Seba was descended from Cush, and the country named after him seems to be identified with Meroe, which is noted in history, a region in the north of Ethiopia, where there are still the remains of a city called Subah. The application of this prediction to any fact in past history has tried the ingenuity of commentators. Of no past period, in so far as is known, can it be said in any natural sense that these kingdoms were given as a ransom for Israel; and therefore the fulfilment must be waited for in her future history. Even if the supposition of a past, although unrecorded accomplishment, be taken, this does not interfere with a future fulfilment of the general passage, that incident being then to be regarded as introduced as an illustration of the fact of God's care for the nation. But for this there is no necessity. A minute and singular



coincidence with this prediction was presented recently in the history of the East, which is sufficient to show how naturally, as the course of events rolls on, the prophecy may still receive a literal accomplishment. When the late Ibrahim Pasha agreed some years ago to evacuate Syria, which he had invaded and made himself master of, the terms on which he evacuated it were, that the possession of Egypt should be guaranteed to him by the four powers of Europe who had combined to drive him out. The demand was complied with; and thus Egypt was given for the ransom of Judea and the rest of Syria, although not in this case, as it will yet be, for the immediate benefit of Israel. The reason why God will thus honour Israel by making countries the price of her ransom is, that in the exercise of his own irresistible sovereignty, he has set his love upon her (4), having chosen her from among the other nations of the earth.—The expression “thou hast been honourable,” is literally, “thou hast been honoured.”—The expression “redeem” (1), which is partly explained by the word “ransom” (3), both of which express correctly the Hebrew original, has further light shed on it in the last clause of this verse. Not only these kingdoms, but their inhabitants also, will form, in a manner which can be known only by the event, the ransom of Israel.

5-7. *Fear not ; for I am with thee : I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west ; I will say to the north, Give up ; and to the south, Keep not back : bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth ; even every one that is called by my name : for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him ; yea, I have made him.*

The gathering of the nation to their own land will form another evidence of the love of the God of Israel. This language has never been fulfilled in their past history, and can refer only to what is future. No words could be more precise or expressive than these, and they

are not more so than many parallel predictions, see xi. 11: "The Lord shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth;" "Behold, these shall come from far; and lo! these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim," xlix. 12.—By "every one that is called by the name of the Lord," is evidently meant the Jewish nation, as the Gentiles in contrast to them are those who are not called by his name, lxiii. 19. This is determined by the following clause, "I have created him for my glory," language by which Israel is often distinguished, as in a following verse of this chapter (21): "This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise." What attribute of the Divine character has not been illustrated and magnified by the history of Israel? His sovereignty has been so, in singling them out from other nations—his long-suffering, in sparing them, notwithstanding their idolatries and unbelief—his power, in preserving them from annihilation by their oppressors—his holiness and justice, in their long and bitter punishment. But it is to what remains of their history that the passage particularly applies; and when that nation shall emerge from their degradation recovered, restored, renewed—when their light shall appear, and Gentiles shall come to that light, how will the Divine truth, and faithfulness, and power be glorified! "Thy people shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, that I may be glorified," lx. 21. With what truth is that people said to be created by the Lord. Contrast the time when Abraham had no child, with the prosperous condition of Israel under David and Solomon; or still better—and it is to this that the text refers—contrast what their state has long been, with what it will be, when the Lord shall be glorified in them, and kings shall come to the brightness of their rising;—and what a creation is here! As if this word did not express with

sufficient significancy how their recovery will be the Lord's own work alone, there is made an accumulation of nearly equivalent expressions, according to the Hebrew idiom, to give intensity to the idea: "I have created him—I have formed him—I have made him." In the circumstance of Israel's recovery being called a creation, there is an answer to an objection which is urged against the fact of her final prosperity, and the objection against it is turned into an argument in its favour. Many hesitate to receive the doctrine of her ultimate glory, because they can see no elements of exaltation in her present degraded state—everything seems to portend hopeless estrangement from God, through their resolute disbelief of the Messiah. But if it appeared otherwise either in regard to their temporal or their spiritual prospects, the very strong assertion in the text, "I have created him," would be weakened. It is because their recovery will be so remarkably a creation—a framing from no previously existing elements—that it will be so signally for the glory of God. It is such a recovery that is to be looked for: "Be ye glad, and rejoice for ever, in that which I create; for behold I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy," lxxv. 18.

8, 9. *Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears. Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled; who among them can declare this, and shew us former things? let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified; or let them hear, and say, It is truth.*

The security for the fulfilment of the preceding promises is the character of God. Such appears to be the bearing of these verses, which are not, however, without obscurity. With the events just foretold in prospect, there is an appeal made to the Jews (8), who, notwithstanding all their opportunities, continue blind, and to all Gentile nations (9), which is to this effect: Did they possess the Divine prerogative of prophesying? could they

declare the issue of events? If so, let them do it, and vindicate themselves; if not, let them acknowledge the truth of God's word. The whole may be regarded as a paraphrase or parallel of that appeal of Elijah which preceded the destruction of the priests of Baal: "If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him," 1 Kings xviii. 21. And so the import of the clause, "Let them bring forth their witnesses," is as if when the clouds of Divine wrath are gathering for the last time against the guilty nations of the earth, a final appeal shall be made to all flesh. And what destruction of the wicked has not been preceded by such an appeal? Not that of the antediluvian world—not that of Sodom and Gomorrah—not that of Jerusalem of old. With the same mockery of idols that was manifested by Elijah in his address to the priests of Baal, "Cry aloud, for he is a god," is the Almighty here represented as saying to the guilty nations of the world previous to their fall, "Let them bring forth their witnesses that they may be justified;" or, presenting an alternative, as in xxvii. 4, 5, "Let them hear and say, It is truth."

10-13. *Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen; that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed (or, nothing formed of God, El), neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the Lord; and besides me there is no saviour. I have declared, and have saved, and I have shewed, when there was no strange god among you: therefore ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God (or, El). Yea, before the day was I am he; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand: I will work, and who shall let it (or, turn it back)?*

The Lord appeals to the Jews themselves as his witnesses, while the guilty nations of the earth are silent—they do not respond to the appeal of the previous verse—they have no witnesses to produce. The history of that nation attests every perfection that Jehovah claims, see verse 7. The epithet "servant," which is often applied to Christ, to whom it pre-eminently belongs, is also fre-



quently applied to Israel, of whom it must here be understood. The import of the clause, "that ye may know and believe (or trust in) me," and of what follows is, that in the history of the Jews there was enough experienced by them to lead them to know and trust in the Lord, and to show that he was the only true God, and the only Saviour (11). What it was in their history that made them the witnesses of God is taught in the commencement of the 12th verse. In connexion with Israel's history, he had declared or foretold events to come, (which seems to be the meaning also of "I have showed"), and he had saved, or wrought deliverances for them—he had, in short, exercised the Divine attributes of foreknowledge and omnipotence before they had learned to worship any false god (12). Even before day dawned on this world did he exist (13), and none could frustrate the work of his hands. Thus, after invoking the nations of the world, previous to the final catastrophe, to choose between him and idols, he asserts his own title to their choice and obedience. That the last clauses of verse 13 allude to the judgments of the nations appears from parallel passages. Thus, in reference to these judgments, it is written similarly, "The Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?" xiv. 27.—The word "let" is here used, as in other parts of Scripture, in the old English, but now obsolete, sense of hinder. The marginal reading expresses better the Hebrew original.

14-17. *Thus saith the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles (or, bars), and the Chaldeans, whose cry is in the ships. I am the Lord, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King. Thus saith the Lord, which maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters; which bringeth forth the chariot and horse, the army, and the power; they shall lie down together, they shall not rise: they are extinct, they are quenched as tow.*

These verses contain two illustrations of that attribute

of omnipotence which is claimed by Jehovah in the preceding. The reference to the capture of Babylon by Cyrus might seem at first sight to favour the presumption that the whole context refers to that period, according to the common exposition of the passage; but there are circumstances, such as the final recovery of Israel (6), and the final prosperity of the land (19, 20), which forbid any natural application of it to that event. And that the case of the capture of Babylon is introduced merely as an illustration, and a very suitable one, of the Divine power, is confirmed, if not set at rest, by the introduction of a second, viz., the destruction of the host of Pharaoh in the Red Sea (16, 17), an event long past at the date of the prophecy. Most easily do these two cases fit in. God, when assuring the nation of their final deliverance at a time when deliverance may seem hopeless, reminds them of the two most signal deliverances they had ever experienced since they were a nation; the second, as well as the first, being past at the time to which the passage points. It is described in the passage as an event accomplished,—which it was not when Isaiah prophesied,—not as what was to be done. The Lord represents himself as having wrought for the safety of the nation, when he sent Cyrus at the head of the Medes and Persians to Babylon, and when he extinguished the rage of Pharaoh and his host in the waters of the Red Sea; and he would work for them again, and who would hinder it? “According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I shew unto him marvellous things,” Micah vii. 15. The allusion to the ships of Babylon is quite in harmony with the fact. The vast commerce of such a city must have been carried on by vessels, for which its situation on the Euphrates, and through that river its connexion with the Persian Gulf and the ocean, was peculiarly favourable. It was also connected by a canal with the Tigris. So extensive was its maritime force at one period, that

Semiramis is said to have had a fleet of 3000 vessels.—The clause “whose cry is in their ships,” appears to express the extensive shipping transactions of the Babylonians. Other suppositions are, that it refers to their flight to their vessels at the capture of the city, or to their use of boats for purposes of pleasure.<sup>1</sup> Verses 16, 17, form evidently a beautiful description of the destruction of the Assyrian host. What formed the path of the Israelites was made the grave of the Egyptians. As the flame of tow is extinguished by water, so were they quenched by the waters of the Red Sea. The scriptural allusions to that disaster furnish some of the most sublime descriptions to be found in any language: “Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters,” Exod. xv. 10.

18-21. *Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing: now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. The beast of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls (or, ostriches, or, daughters of the owl); because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen. This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.*

Having reminded the nation of what he had done, the Lord declares what he would do in regard to their ultimate prosperity. The “former things” in this instance must be understood as referring to the two events just described, viz., the fate of Babylon and of the Egyptians, although not to the exclusion of other “former things,” see xli. 22, which confirms the opinion that Babylon is here introduced only as an illustration of a deliverance long past at the time to which the predictions of this

<sup>1</sup> “Nobles,” literally, as in the margin, bars, from בָּרָח, 1. to flee; 2. to stretch across as a bar. Henderson and others translate “barriers;” Barnes and others, “fugitives;” the former translation referring to the bars of the gates, or, figuratively, to the defenders of the city; the latter to the Babylonians themselves, or to the strangers within the city.

chapter refer. The "new thing" promised to the nation is the restored possession and fertility of the land, intimated by a highway and rivers being opened in a land which have long been comparatively untrodden and parched. The fact is often predicted in connexion with the return of Israel to their king and to their land: "Make straight in the desert a highway for our God. In the wilderness shall waters break out and streams in the desert, and the parched ground shall become a pool and the thirsty land springs of water." The expression "spring forth," as in xlii. 9, implies that there will be no previous appearance of the change referred to, any more than there is of the blade before the grain germinate. So gladdening will be the change effected, that the beasts and birds are represented (20) as sharing in the universal joy, when nature after her long slumbers shall revive and clothe with her fertility that land which formed before, and will form again, one of the fairest parts of her dominions. The noun translated "owls" is supposed to signify the ostrich, as in the margin. Then the earnest expectation of the creature which waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God will be gratified. The great end wherefore God hath chosen Israel and dealt with her so wonderfully during her eventful history, will then be fully answered. In her prosperity even more than in her adversity, she will show forth the praises of her God and King (21): "Thy sun shall no more go down—the days of thy mourning shall be ended—thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified," lx. 20.

22-24. *But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel. Thou hast not brought me the small cattle (or, lambs, or, kids) of thy burnt-offerings, neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices: I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense. Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me (or, made me drunk, or, abundantly*



*moistened) with the fat of thy sacrifices; but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities.*

Although the purpose of God in choosing Israel was his own glory, it has been disappointed in time past. He has had cause for that complaint which is here described. Though he has set his love on them, yet as a nation they have not returned it. They are charged with wearying of him, with refusing to honour him with the appointed offerings (23), though in what he claimed he exacted nothing excessive, nothing burdensome, to oppress and weary them. But instead of receiving at their hands the costliest and the choicest offerings which he valued (24), such as the sweet cane which came from a far country, Jer. vi. 20, their sins against him had been so multiplied that, like a load, they oppressed and wearied him. It does not appear that the charge made here refers to any one particular period in their history, but that it is a general one, descriptive of their national guilt as a whole. Similar complaints are made in other places against Israel. Thus in Malachi i. 12, 13, we read, "Ye have profaned it in that ye say the table of the Lord is polluted. Ye said also, behold what a weariness is it; ye brought that which was torn, and the lame and the sick." The point of the complaint does not however appear to be that they had ceased to present the appointed offerings, but that they had not made them to the Lord, the emphasis, Lowth remarks, lying on the pronoun "me." So in the parallel passages, generally, fault is found not with the neglect of offering, but with the manner of it. Thus again, "To what purpose cometh there to me incense from Sheba, and the sweet cane from a far country? your burnt-offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto me," Jer. vi. 20. This was the point reprehended by our Lord in the Jews of his day. The description applies to the religious condition of the nation then, and for long before their removal from Jerusalem by Titus; it constituted

one of the elements which, combined, brought down upon them their national judgments.

25. *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.*

Such being the guilt of Israel, it will not be on account of anything in them that God will extend to them at last his pardoning grace, it will be for his own name's sake. As he chose the nation at first just because it pleased him,—as he set his love on them, it is written, just because he loved them,—so will it be again. And how perfect is the forgiveness which is promised them. Their guilt will be removed from the book of God's remembrance as completely as is a charge of debt when it is blotted out—it will be for ever forgotten. In the act of pardon, as in every act of the Almighty, there appears divinity, there is seen what is superhuman. Man cannot deal thus with the offences of a fellow-creature. He may remove them from the record of his wrongs, but he cannot blot them from the tablet of his memory. He may forgive—if the servant of him who commands to forgive until seventy times seven, he must forgive,—but he feels it impossible to forget. The remembrance of past differences is always rising up between once estranged but now reconciled friends, to damp and mar their fellowship. But there will be none of this on the part of God to interrupt the blessedness of Israel at last. Whether they will forgive themselves, or forget their national guilt, he will not remember it. The sin of Israel is often said to be so dealt with when they shall turn unto the Lord. In those days “the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for and there shall be none, and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found,” see i. 18.

26-28. *Put me in remembrance ; let us plead together : declare thou, that thou mayest be justified. Thy first father hath sinned, and thy teachers (or, interpreters) have transgressed against me. Therefore I have profaned the princes (or, holy princes) of the sanctuary, and have given Jacob to the curse, and Israel to reproaches.*

The nation is here addressed in that tone of irony which has occurred in repeated previous instances. The Almighty represents himself as having forgotten their claims upon his mercy; If they had any, would they remind him of them, that they might debate the matter together? Would they justify themselves if they could? The whole people had sinned (22-24), their rulers (first father<sup>1</sup>) and priests (margin) had also sinned (27), and therefore it was that the priests (princes of the sanctuary) had been visited with degradation (28), and the whole nation with suffering and shame. Very frequently in this book, and in the other prophets, the rulers, teachers, and priests of the Jewish nation, are made the subject of special blame and condemnation, and their sin is represented as a cause of the nation's judgments, see i. 23. "The heads of Zion judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money, therefore shall Zion for your sake be ploughed as a field," Micah ii. 12. In the days of our Lord, also, they were singled out for special reproof. It was the Scribes and Pharisees who were called hypocrites—blind guides—fools and blind—serpents—a generation of vipers.

## CHAPTER XLIV.

AFTER the national punishment of Israel for their sin, described in the close of the previous chapter, from which this one is improperly disjoined, there is foretold their final conversion. To give weight to this assurance, and to remind them that he who had promised was able also

<sup>1</sup> ראשון signifies first in dignity as well as in time, or chief. The expression is generally applied to the rulers of the nation.

to perform, it is followed by a declaration of the power of the Lord, which is contrasted with a description of false gods, and of the folly of putting confidence in them, uttered in that strain of irony which has been noticed in several previous chapters, where the same subject has been introduced ; and concludes with renewed assurances of deliverance to Israel, and renewed declarations of the power of him who promised, appealing to past instances of interposition in behalf of the nation.

1, 2. *Yet now hear, O Jacob, my servant ; and Israel, whom I have chosen : thus saith the Lord that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee ; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant ; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen.*

The first verses (1-5) are fully explained only by referring them to the final conversion of Israel. It is in connexion with the national judgments of that period, and the reduced condition of Israel then, that they are often called on not to fear, see xliii. 1. One argument for their confidence in God is what he had done for them from the beginning (2). He had made and formed them from the womb ; as in a parallel passage, he reminds them how they were the seed of Abraham his friend—made what they were from so small and unexpected a beginning,—sprung, as the nation was, of one who in his old age had no child.—Jeshurun is a name of Israel which occurs in three other instances. It is supposed to be a title of endearment. Its etymology is unknown.

3, 4. *For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground ; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring : and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses.*

The promise of the final fertility of the land and the conversion of the people is here made. There is no necessity for departing from the literality of the former of these clauses, explaining it by the second, and understanding the whole of spiritual blessings. Each of them



is often made the subject of separate prediction: there is promised water for their land as well as the grace of the Spirit for themselves. There is nothing in the original, as in the English translation, to indicate that the people, not the land, are the objects of the blessing, the literal Hebrew being, "upon the thirsty," and being as applicable to the land as to the nation. The former of these blessings has often occurred already as the subject of prophetic promise. And the latter is as clearly foretold, see xxxii. 15: "The Redeemer shall come to Zion, and to them that turn from ungodliness in Jacob. This is my covenant with them, saith the Lord, My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth from henceforth and for ever," lix. 21. Such passages, which are all connected, if language in this case is to receive its obvious meaning, with the final conversion of Israel in their own land after their judgments are over, show to what period the promise of the Spirit in the text refers. In xxxii. 15, there is the same conjunction within the compass of a single verse as here, of blessings for the people and for the land: "Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest." The prosperous condition of the nation, when returned to their land and to their king, is expressed by the comparison of grass and willows growing beside water-brooks (4), whose growth, especially in an eastern clime, is peculiarly rapid and luxuriant. Similarly it is foretold that Israel will then be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters fail not, l. 11.

5. *One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel.*

The conversion of Israel will be followed by that of Gentile nations. That this verse applies to the Gentiles may be inferred from its second and last clauses. To call

oneself by the name of Jacob can have no meaning if understood of an Israelite: they are so called already. The same relation of these events is often pointed to in prophecy: "If the fall of them be the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness? If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?" Rom. xi. 12, 15. Not only is it foretold in the text that the Lord will be honoured by those of other nations saying that they are the Lord's, but that Israel also will be so honoured. In those days it shall come to pass that Gentiles shall say of the Jew, "We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you," Zech. viii. 23.—In the clause "another shall subscribe with his hand," there is reference to the signing of contracts; or, translating "upon his hand," the reference is supposed to be to a custom of marking upon slaves and others the name of their superior.

6-8. *Thus saith the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer the Lord of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and besides me there is no God. And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since I appointed the ancient people? and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew unto them. Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God besides me? yea, there is no God (or, rock); I know not any.*

The Lord, as if to meet the weakness of Israel's faith in his word, reminds them who had given the promise, and what was the relation in which he stood to them. While he was the Lord he was also the King of Israel; while he was the Lord of hosts he was also the Redeemer of Israel. He also appeals to his self-existence and eternity as the one true God—attributes which pertain to him alone—as the pledge that his power could execute what his mercy promised. He appeals further, and with the same object, to his omniscience (7), his foreknowledge even of events to come. Who but he could declare future events—with reference perhaps to the events of Jewish history, or

rather, as would appear from the following verse, to the event of their final restoration, which had just been the subject of description—Who but he could declare future events, as had been done in regard to Israel since the time that he had chosen them from among the nations? Could false gods do so, and show them things to come? The argument is clearly the same as in several preceding cases, and in an instance which follows: “I am God, and there is none else, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done,” xlv. 10. He has done among Israel what he has done among none else, and what none but he could have done: he has revealed to them from the time he chose them the events of their own history. Hence they are said to be his witnesses (8), that he was the true and only God. The importance of prophecy, as at least one principal evidence of the being of God, is apparent from the use which is made of it in this case. It is an evidence which was manifested through Israel, which was deposited with them, and of which they uniformly have been the subjects; for there is scarcely an event in their history, not only since their first captivity, but before it, from the first hour of their national existence, and even before that, from the time when Abraham left his father’s house, which has not been the subject of prophecy. Hence, in every sense, they are the witnesses of God. The fulfilment of the long series of predictions, in the prophetic register, of all the remarkable events of Jewish history, has furnished, from the days of Abraham, proof of the divinity of the God of Israel.

9-11. *They that make a graven image are all of them vanity; and their delectable (or, desirable) things shall not profit; and they are their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed. Who hath formed a god (or, El), or molten a graven image, that is profitable for nothing? Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed; and the workmen, they are of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; yet they shall fear, and they shall be ashamed together.*

The foregoing assertion and proof, that the God of Israel is the true God, is succeeded by an exposure and reproof of idolatry, in a description of idols, delivered in the same sarcastic tone which marks similar previous but more brief accounts, see xl. 18. The description, from its abruptness, which, however, suits all the better, and arises from, its sarcasm, is sometimes obscure. It represents the makers of images as themselves vanity, and, as a necessary consequence, the idols themselves are no better; what they delight in<sup>1</sup> cannot profit them, the purpose for which a god is sought. It asserts that they themselves are witnesses to the truth of this—and yet they do not allow it, for they are blind and ignorant; hence, in the end, when their idols fail them in the hour of need, they are ashamed.—The clause “they see not, nor know,” may be understood as of similar import with verse 18. That such will be the result among the idolatrous nations of the world at last is often foretold: “They shall be ashamed and confounded all of them, they shall go to confusion together that are makers of idols,” xlv. 16. Such being the value of idols, the question is put (11), Who so foolish as to fashion a useless image? The fate of all who trust in images, of which mortal man (they are of men) are the framers, is repeated (12). Though gathered together—whether the meaning be to justify their idolatry, or to avert danger, is not clear, apparently the former—yet, as when the first pair were called on to justify themselves with their Maker, they would be seized with fear and shame.

12-17. *The smith with the tongs (or, with an axe) both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms; yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth: he drinketh no water, and is faint. The carpenter stretcheth out his rule, he marketh it out with a line, he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man, that it may remain in the house. He*

<sup>1</sup> Delectable, from a root signifying to covet, to delight in.



*heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth (or, taketh courage) for himself among the trees of the forest : he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it. Then shall it be for a man to burn : for he will take thereof, and warm himself ; yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread ; yea, he maketh a god (or, El), and worshippeth it : he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. He burneth part thereof in the fire ; with part thereof he eateth flesh ; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied : yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire : And the residue thereof he maketh a god (or, El), even his graven image : he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me ; for thou art my god.*

A very graphic picture of idol-making is drawn in these verses, the object of which is to cover idolatry with ridicule. The work of the smith is first described ; vigorously as he plies his task, the maker of the god is yet mortal ; he becomes hungry and exhausted ; his god does not exempt him from the infirmities of humanity. Barnes quotes Williams to show that the South Sea islanders abstain from food, even for days together, when engaged in idol-making. Were this the custom among idolaters, allusion might be supposed to be to it in the text. Barnes, following Gesenius and others, translates the first clause, " the smith prepareth an axe," remarking that this part of the description does not apply to the making of the image, which is one of wood (21), but to the tool, the axe, to be used in its construction, liv. 16. But may not the description embrace the making of two images, the one of metal, the other of wood ; or rather, does not the smith's part of the work refer to the metallic covering with which wooden idols were often adorned ? xl. 19, 20. There have been different translations of the clause. Literally it is " the workman of iron, an axe." Lowth supplies, " cutteth off." The part that the carpenter performs is next represented with great minuteness ; but what some of the instruments employed are, is uncertain. The English version appears to express the Hebrew as correctly as any other, except in the word " planes," for which the

rather vague but more intelligible translation, "sharp tools," is usually substituted. The material of which the idol is constructed is stated next (14). The most durable trees, the cedar, the cypress, or the oak,<sup>1</sup> are selected, and others are planted for future use, and are watered by the rain. The conclusion of the verse points out how contemptible is the origin of the god which is formed from a tree which was planted by the hand and dependent for its existence and growth on the rain. Next are narrated the different uses to which the tree is put when cut down (15-17). Part of it is employed for giving warmth to the body, part for cooking food, and part is converted into a god, and worshipped and trusted in for help. The point of this satire is quite apparent.

18-20. *They have not known nor understood : for he hath shut (or, daubed) their eyes, that they cannot see ; and their hearts, that they cannot understand. And none considereth in (or, setteth to) his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burnt part of it in the fire ; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof ; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it : and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination ? shall I fall down to the stock (or, that which comes) of a tree ? He feedeth on ashes : a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand ?*

A natural corollary from what precedes is the delusion and blindness of idolaters. Their understandings are left by God as they naturally are, blinded as are the eyes which are daubed over with mortar (margin), so that they do not perceive the folly of converting that into a god, the rest of which they use for fuel (19). The idol will profit its worshipper as much as ashes nourish the body (20). But a deceived heart prevents the idolater from seeing this, and that the idol which he holds in his hand is a lie—false and deceitful—and no god.

<sup>1</sup> "He strengtheneth," is translated literally in the text. The meaning is uncertain. The most natural view of it is, that it expresses the exertions made in cutting down the trees.

21, 22. *Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.*

Israel is warned against yielding to such delusions, and reminded of the claims which the Almighty had upon her fidelity to him, as his servant, his workmanship, the object of his constant love. Though Zion might say, "The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me," xlix. 14, yet his promise is, "O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me." To enhance his claims upon the service of the nation, he represents his final reconciliation with them (22), and the removal of all their evils. The appeal is the same as is made in the 41st chapter, and on the same ground. There is in it the same reference to idol-making (7)—the same remembrance of the relation in which Israel stood to God (8)—"Israel my servant—Jacob whom I have chosen—the seed of Abraham my friend"—followed by a similar relation of what God will do for them when he shall bless the people and bless the land. It is to this period that the language of the 22d verse refers, as appears both from its own significance and from the succeeding context, which connects the forgiveness here described with the final prosperity of the nation. The same idea of the completeness of the reconciliation of their offended king is expressed here as in a recent passage, see xliii. 25. As the cloud which appears in the heavens is often carried away, so that no trace of it is left, so would the sin of Israel be finally removed. This language has surely never been fulfilled in their past history. Their judgments, the index of their sin and of the divine displeasure, have not yet ceased never to return. The clause, "return unto me, for I have redeemed thee"—that being here represented as come, which in the previous clause is represented, for their encouragement,

as done—implies that their return to God will be subsequent to their redemption from their enemies, see xi. 11. Their conversion will be the effect of their deliverances, not the cause of them. He will first make them a burdensome stone to all the nations, thus effecting their deliverance; and after that, he will pour out his Spirit on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Zech. xii.

23. *Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.*

The rejoicing of the whole creation, which groaneth until then, is often represented as a characteristic of the time of Israel's salvation—of the days of the Messiah: "Sing, O heavens, and be joyful, O earth, and break forth into singing, O mountains; for the Lord hath comforted his people," xlix. 10-13; "The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands," lv. 12; "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad—then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord, for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth," Ps. lxxvi. 11-13. In these instances it is in connexion with the dealings of God with Israel, at the period of the establishment of his kingdom on earth, that the joy of inanimate nature is represented as being excited, and to this period the language of the text must also be applied. It was in a very inferior sense that he was glorified of Israel in their deliverance from Babylon in comparison of what he will be when the glory of the Lord shall be risen upon them, when recovered to their land and to their God. This twofold redemption, both from temporal calamities and from spiritual blindness—this redemption on a large scale, the redemption of a nation, which will be in a dark world like brightness, like a burning lamp, lxii. 1—will



magnify many, it may be said all, of the perfections of Jehovah.

24-28. *Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord that maketh all things ; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone ; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself ; that frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad ; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish ; that confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers ; that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited ; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built ; and I will raise up the decayed (or, waste) places thereof : That saith to the deep, Be dry ; and I will dry up thy rivers : That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure : even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built ; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.*

The previous promise of what in the end will be wrought for Israel is followed, as in repeated previous instances, as if for the greater assurance of the nation, by a declaration of the character of him who promises, and of what he has done in time past for Israel. As king of Israel, he had made her all that she was, having formed the nation from the womb ; and as universal king, in contrast with idols the creation of human hands, he is the maker of all things. In contrast likewise with the failures of lying soothsayers, whose acts he frustrateth (25), and with the purposes and arrangements of human wisdom, which he turns into foolishness, the word of his servants prophesying by his inspiration, holds good (26). This disappointing of all earthly scheming is often claimed by the Almighty : " The princes of Zoan are become fools ; the Lord hath mingled a perverse spirit in the midst thereof," xix. 13 ; " The rulers take counsel together against the Lord. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh," Ps. ii. 2, 4 ; " He bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought ; he maketh the devices of the people of none effect ; the counsel of the Lord standeth for ever," Ps. xxxiii. 10, 11. How has this truth been illustrated in the case of Israel ? What problem in politics is more difficult of solution, or has been more perplexing to statesmen,

than the government of Syria; and how often, even already, in regard to it, has the Almighty turned wise men backward, and made their knowledge foolish? But his own word, that foretells prosperity to the depopulated cities and desolate lands of Israel—saying to the former, “Ye shall be built,” and to the wastes (margin) of the latter, “I will raise up,” or restore, and this not merely in regard to any minor judgment, but in regard to that which still rests upon them—that word shall be confirmed. In other places which unquestionably refer to the final prosperity of the land, it is similarly written, “Thou shalt be like a well-watered garden, and they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places,” lviii. 12; “They shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations,” lxi. 4; “I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, even all of it; and the cities shall be inhabited and the wastes builded in the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities. I shall also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the desolate land shall be tilled,” Ezek. xxxvi. 10, 33, 34. According to the analogy of these texts, the last clause, “I will raise up the wastes thereof,” refers not to the barrenness of the land, but to the ruins of the cities. It is, however, equally true of the former, as other Scripture abundantly proves. Another manifestation of the power of God—of his superiority to idols—is his drying up the deep with a word (27). This may be understood as a general truth, or—and this appears to be the allusion here—as referring to the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt when a path was opened through the waters of the Red Sea, as in xliii. 16; or to the deliverance from Babylon, when the waters of the Euphrates were transferred into a new channel by Cyrus, that by the old one he might introduce his army into the city. The last, however, is not an illustration of Divine power like the others; it cannot be said in this case that the deep dried up at the voice of the Lord. Besides these, there is fore-

told a yet future illustration of God saying to the deep, Be dry. "The Lord," it is said, "shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea, and shall smite the river in the seven streams, and make men go over dry-shod," see xi. 15, also li. 10. A last illustration of divine power introduced by the prophet is the employment of Cyrus as the instrument of God in delivering the Jews from Babylon, and rebuilding Jerusalem and its temple (28). He was the son of Cambyzes king of Persia, and of Mandane, the daughter of Astyages the king of Media, which two kingdoms were united in his reign. The employment of so celebrated a monarch as the shepherd of God in leading the Jews from Babylon to Judea, of which he was the means, is a fit illustration of divine power. The part he acted in the deliverance of the Jews, and in the rebuilding of the temple, is recorded in sacred history in 2 Chron. xxxvi. 22, 23; Ezra i.; and in profane history by Xenophon and others. Josephus relates that the prophecy by Isaiah was pointed out to Cyrus by the Jews when in Babylon. It has been supposed that it is to it that he refers in his edict inviting the Jews to return to Jerusalem: "Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given me; *and he hath charged me to build him an house in Jerusalem*, which is in Judah: who is there among you of all his people? The Lord his God be with him, and let him go up," 2 Chron. xxxvi. 23.

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## CHAPTER XLV.

THE illustration of divine power furnished by the history of Cyrus as the deliverer of the Jews from Babylon, passes into the form of a lengthened, and often singularly

minute, prediction of that event, which extends over this and the two following chapters ; mingled up largely, however, with references to deliverance from that worse captivity, as it may be called, which followed the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, of which nearly 1800 years have already run ; compared with which the seventy years' captivity in Babylon, both as to duration and severity, is scarcely to be named ; and which will terminate only when the Lord shall have mercy upon Zion and shall turn away iniquity from Jacob, preparatory to the establishment of his own kingdom of righteousness over all the earth.

1-4. *Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden (or, strengthened), to subdue nations before him ; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates ; and the gates shall not be shut : I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight : I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron : And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the Lord, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name : I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me.*

The Almighty is represented as addressing Cyrus as the anointed of the Lord, an expression which is often applied to the Saviour—which is the signification of his most familiar names, Christ, and the Messiah. As it was by anointing, that kings and others were consecrated to their office, under the Jewish economy, to be anointed would be equivalent to being set apart to the particular office, in which signification it was most applicable to Cyrus. In his wonderful achievements he was but the instrument of God, who led him by the hand, and upheld him (margin) as a child which needs support. What is foretold of subduing nations before him was abundantly fulfilled in his case, for no fewer than fourteen nations are enumerated as having been subdued by him. Xenophon



describes his kingdom as extending from the Mediterranean to the Indian ocean, and from Ethiopia to the Euxine. It is remarkable, however, that these successes did not involve the destruction of a single kingdom, or even the great bloodshed that might be supposed, in these days, to accompany such successes. And in this respect there is a great contrast between his conquests and those final judgments of the nations which shall mark the career of Christ on another and future occasion, when he shall judge among the nations. As girding the loins, or securing the flowing robe worn about the person in the East, indicated preparation for work, or war,—so loosing the loins, as it occurs in the text, expresses unpreparedness, unfitness, or feebleness. This was fulfilled by so many kings falling so easy a prey to the Persian monarch. The expression has also been regarded in another light. If the loins be regarded as the seat of strength, to loose them is to render helpless. In this view, which is in substance the same as the other, there was a fulfilment of the very language of the prophecy when Belshazzar the king of Babylon was startled by the writing on the wall, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, Dan. v. 6. Others have supposed that the allusion is to the removal of the sword-belt, said to be an ancient method of disarming. The opening of the two-leaved, or large folding gates, was fulfilled to the letter, by the well-known fact recorded by Herodotus, that when the army of Cyrus had passed within the outer wall of Babylon by the channel of the Euphrates, they found the inner gates of the city, contrary to custom, open; but for which circumstance, their passage through the outer walls would have been of little avail; the inner walls would have been still to force; and enclosed between the two, the Persian army would have been in a position of great danger, had ordinary vigilance been manifested on the part of the Babylonians. The gates of

the palace were also thrown open on that night of revelry, by order of the king, when the cry of alarm was raised. In thus giving Cyrus unopposed access to the very heart of the city, which with common care would have been impregnable, or at least would have withstood a very protracted siege, God made the crooked places straight<sup>1</sup> (2), and virtually broke in pieces the gates of brass, of which Babylon had an hundred. The treasures which fell into the hands of Cyrus—the next incident noticed in the prophecy (3)—at the taking of Babylon, and in his other successes, is stated by historians to have been immense. These it was customary to secure in secret places; often, it is stated, in periods of hostile invasion, in caves; hence they are called “treasures of darkness,” “hidden riches,” riches “of secret places” (3). One of the conquests of Cyrus was that of Sardis, the capital of Croesus, whose riches are proverbial. The wealth found in Babylon must have been very great. It is noticed by Jeremiah, l. 37; li. 13. So signal altogether was the interposition of the Almighty in behalf of Cyrus, and so many were the favours showered upon him, that he did not fail to acknowledge the hand of God in his successes; he was taught that the Lord was the God of Israel: “Thus saith Cyrus the king of Persia, the Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth,” Ezra i. 2. It was for the sake of his people Israel that he was made what he was (4). Isaiah prophesied about 150 years before the deliverance from the Babylonish captivity, and for all that period had Cyrus been called by name; one of the few instances in which prophecy is so specific as to mention by name the actors in its accomplishment. And not only was he called by name, but he who was a heathen—who had not known God—was called to his work by so

<sup>1</sup> Crooked places, from הָרָר, to be broad, also to be extended in height; hence the translation generally adopted is, “I will make the high places level.”

tender and honourable<sup>1</sup> a title as shepherd, the anointed of the Lord.

5-7. *I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God besides me : I girded thee, though thou hast not known me ; that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none besides me. I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness ; I make peace, and create evil. I the Lord do all these things.*

In acting as he did by Cyrus, girding and strengthening him, while he ungirded or enfeebled the king of Babylon and all his enemies, he showed that there is no God but himself. But while his subordinate purpose in all this was the deliverance of Israel, the primary one was the promotion of his own glory (6). It was this plea which Hezekiah rightly urged when pressed by Sennacherib, "O Lord our God, save us from his hand, that all the kings of the earth may know that thou art the Lord, even thou only," xxxvii. 20. And so, in reference to the final deliverance and restoration of Israel, it is written, "Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion ; so the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth thy glory," Ps. cii. 13, 15 ; see xliii. 7. No doubt, the capture of so famed a city as Babylon, by such a conqueror as Cyrus, would attract universal notice in the then known world, and the public recognition of Jehovah in his decree would spread the name and fame of the one true God. The 7th verse, which is a continuation of the preceding, unfolds at greater length the character of that God who wrought so wonderfully by Cyrus. Lowth supposes that there is reference in the language to the religious belief which prevailed in Persia then, in the existence of two antagonist principles, the one light, the cause of all good ; the other darkness, the cause of all evil ; and that the Lord here claims each power as his

<sup>1</sup> Surnamed, from כִּנּוּיָא, supposed to signify, to call by an honourable or affectionate title, Is. xlv. 5 ; Job xxxii. 21.

creature. Others regard the passage as merely expressing that of the favours experienced by Cyrus, and of the calamities inflicted on his enemies, God was alike the author. Perhaps all that is intended is, that both the creation and the government of all things are of God.—The word “evil” does not necessarily signify moral evil, sin ; it also signifies adversity, calamity.

8. *Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness ; let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together : I the Lord have created it.*

In this verse the prophet passes from the creation of the elements and the government of the nations, to what, humanly speaking, is a more difficult creation, viz., that of universal righteousness on earth. This will illustrate strikingly the truth, that beside the Lord there is none else. It describes a state of things approached neither at the time of the return from Babylon, nor ever since, but which will be realized when Christ shall take unto him his kingdom. Parallel Scripture, in which also the very figures of the text are employed, connects this passage with that time. The desolation of Judea is to continue until the Spirit be poured out from on high—then “righteousness shall remain in the fruitful field, and the work of righteousness shall be peace,” xxxii. 15, 17 ; “The Lord will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations,” lxi. 11 ; “I will cause the shower to come down in his season ; there shall be showers of blessing,” Ezek. xxxiv. 26. At the best, hitherto righteousness has visited this earth only as the mere droppings of the shower ; but then it will be poured down. Now righteousness is like a hot-house plant brought from its own proper clime, reared with difficulty on earth, and but delicate when reared ; then it will spring up as the plant does in its native soil. But that can be only in the new earth when all things are made new. This will be a creation, an illustration of Almighty power.



9, 10. *Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker ! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou ? or thy work, He hath no hands ? Woe unto him that saith unto his father, What begettest thou ? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth ?*

The connexion of these verses is not very clear. They are, however, to be regarded as asserting, like the preceding, the power of the Almighty. Paul applies them to the complaint of man against the Divine decrees. Here they seem to refer to complaints on the part of the Jews against God's severe but righteous dealings with them ; but whatever the special allusion may be, the object is the maintenance of the Divine sovereignty and power. God is the universal Creator, while man is declared to be but a potsherd<sup>1</sup> and clay ; as dependent on him as the clay is for its shape on the potter, as the child is for its existence on its parent (10). The absurdity of questioning the Divine sovereignty and omnipotence is well brought out, in language which cannot be made more forcible or more plain. That implied in the last clause of verse 9, Alexander remarks, consists in the thing made denying the existence of the hands by which it was itself produced ; and verse 10, which he translates literally in the future tense, "What wilt thou beget?" represents the discontent of men, in reference to God's dealings with them, as no less monstrous than the supposition of a child's objection to its own birth.

11-13. *Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons ; and concerning the work of my hands command ye me. I have made the earth, and created man upon it : I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens ; and all their host have I commanded. I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct (or, make straight) all her ways : he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the Lord of hosts.*

<sup>1</sup> Gesenius and others translate "a potsherd (piece of broken pottery) of the potsherds of the earth," giving to the preposition מִן the signification of "among"—man a frail creature among the frail.

The subject is still the majesty of God, in contrast with the insignificance of man, and the nothingness of idols. If any wished to ascertain the future destiny of Israel, here called "his sons," "the work of his hands," the quarter to apply to was not an idol, not man, but God, the emphasis resting on the pronoun "me;" and the expression "command," denoting how readily God would hear and answer. His omnipotence, as the universal Creator and Governor, is again declared (12), and illustrated by further reference to the events which he would accomplish through the instrumentality of Cyrus (13). These various predictions became all facts at the downfall of Babylon. Cyrus was raised up in righteousness, or for a righteous purpose. The Lord made straight (margin) his ways in opening a path for him into the heart of Babylon, see verse 1. It was by his deliverance of the Jews from their captivity there, when he let go the captives, and by his instigation, that the city Jerusalem was rebuilt after the captivity; and he did all without hire, that is, from no selfish motive. He did not, as was foretold of him and his host, "regard silver; and as for gold he did not delight in it," xiii. 17. On the contrary, he is said by Josephus to have given orders that the Jews should be supplied with money for the building of the temple, and for the purchase of beasts for sacrifice. Such also is the testimony of Ezra: "Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia, whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver and with gold, and with goods and with beasts," i. 4.

14, 15. *Thus saith the Lord, The labour of Egypt, and merchandise of Ethiopia, and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come over unto thee, and they shall be thine: they shall come after thee; in chains they shall come over, and they shall fall down unto thee; they shall make supplication unto thee, saying, Surely God (or, El) is in thee, and there is none else; there is no God. Verily thou art a God (or, El) that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour.*

There is now made by the prophet, what is so frequent,

a transition from the events of the deliverance from Babylon to those of the final deliverance of Israel, when her curse will be removed ; and, according to the degree in which she has been afflicted, she will be blessed. The favour shown by Cyrus, in forwarding her return from her former captivity, is a symbol and earnest of the manner in which the Lord will move the hearts of kings and nations towards her at her return to Judea, after the period of her present banishment has expired. If it seems to any an irrational thing to understand literally what is foretold of kings being her nursing fathers, and of her eating the riches of the Gentiles, let it be remembered that this will be nothing more than she experienced first at the hands of the Egyptians, and again at the hands of Cyrus and the Persians ; and the thing is not more improbable in regard to the future than to the past. The prophet having foretold the aid Israel would experience from the greatest of monarchs, when she would return from Babylon, foretells next how similar honour will be put upon her when she shall be gathered from all the nations among which she has been scattered. Some of the consequences of the visible interferences of God in her behalf will be, that the nations around will place their wealth and service at her disposal, honouring God in honouring her. Egypt, Ethiopia, and Seba (a district bordering on the former) will be among those who will lay their treasures at her feet. There is an evident connexion between this passage and xliii. 2, where the same kingdoms are specified, "I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee." The prediction is clear, but, being unfulfilled, the manner of its accomplishment is naturally dark. The different incidents of the verse are as distinct and positive as those of the preceding, and will doubtless receive as literal an accomplishment ; and if they have not their exact counterpart in any past historical facts—and with scarcely an exception

no attempt has been made by commentators so to apply them—it must be waited for in future events. And may it not be one purpose of placing prophecies, whose fulfilment has been the most literal and minute possible, side by side with others of which no literal fulfilment has yet been given, to teach that the accomplishment of the latter may be expected to be as minute as that of the former; and that if not supplied by past history, it will be by what is to come. Predictions corresponding with those in the text are made in regard to the nations of the earth generally, and all in connexion with the return and conversion of Israel: “The abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces (margin, riches) of the Gentiles shall come unto thee. The multitude of camels shall cover thee: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of the Lord,” lx. 5, 6. And in more particular coincidence with the text, we read, “Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God,” Ps. lxxviii. 31; “The kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts,” Ps. lxxii. 10. The similarity of these passages must identify them as referring to the same events, and their context fixes them down to the period of Israel’s conversion to the Lord. “The labour of Egypt” here signifies the fruit of labour, as elsewhere, Jer. xx. 5. It is the parallel of merchandise. In regard to the expression “men of stature,” it is mentioned by Herodotus, that the Ethiopians, to which family the Sabeans belonged, were distinguished by their great height. Looking to the course of God’s dealings with Israel, both of what is past and of what is to come, how apposite is the exclamation, “Verily he is a God that hideth himself,” both in reference to the mystery of his providences toward his ancient people, and of the degree to which he has withdrawn his favour from them. Similarly it is said, “I will wait upon the Lord who hideth his face from the house of Jacob; and I will



look for him," viii. 17; "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee," liv. 8.

16, 17. *They shall be ashamed, and also confounded, all of them: they shall go to confusion together that are makers of idols. But Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation: ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.*

The prophet having been drawn, by the description of the favour shown to Israel by Cyrus, to notice that which will be shown to her by the nations of the earth after the days of her mourning shall be ended, adverts to some other circumstances connected with that event. The destruction of the enemies of Israel who shall be gathered against Jerusalem, which will form the last and fatal blow that will be struck against idolatry, is foretold (16), followed by a declaration, by way of contrast to their fate, of the final deliverance and prosperity of Israel (17). The same events are often described in similar language, and in the same juxtaposition. Thus, in a psalm which is prophetic of the time when the Lord reigneth, and the earth rejoiceth, it is said, "Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols. Zion heard, and was glad, the daughters of Judah rejoiced because of thy judgments, O Lord," xcvii. 7, 8. Of that time it is said, in contrast to the shame which has formed so large an element in her punishment, "Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale," xxix. 22. The duration of Israel's prosperity will be that of the kingdom of Christ on earth: "As the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before me, so shall your name and your seed remain," lxvi. 22.

18, 19. *For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth, and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited; I am the Lord, and there is none else. I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I the Lord speak righteousness, I declare things that are right.*

The allusion to Israel's past deliverance is followed by a declaration of the power and divinity of God. Why such declarations should be connected here, and in repeated other instances, with the saving of that nation, may be accounted for on various grounds ; either because, by his dealings with Jew and Gentile then, the perfections of his character will be magnified, for when his judgments shall be abroad in the earth, it will be seen in a way that there will be no gainsaying, that the Lord he is God ; or because the contrast between the vanity of the gods of the heathen and the power of the one true God, will be then manifested ; or as an encouragement to the Jews to expect the blessings promised, the character of God being given as a guarantee that what he had promised, he was able to perform—that what he had said, that he would do. If the word “earth” be understood in its usual meaning, it appears to refer particularly to the condition of Judea, which is a country without a people, although once one of the most populous and most fertile of kingdoms. Such a state of matters as this the Almighty is represented as saying, he did not intend ; he formed the earth to be inhabited, not to be left desolate. Or if the “earth” of the 18th verse be understood of its condition at the time pointed to in the previous verse—the time when the Lord shall reign in Zion—if it be understood of the new earth, which will be new in so far as in it righteousness will dwell ; then the Almighty says of it, when from it his judgments shall have swept sin for ever away, that he hath established it—that he hath created it anew not in vain, but to be inhabited. A people shall then be created which shall praise the Lord, Ps. cii. 18. Then the Lord will sow the house of Israel and the house of Jacob with the seed of man, and with the seed of beast, Jer. xxxi. 27. He will multiply men upon the mountains of Israel, he will multiply upon them man and beast, Ezek. xxxvi. 10, 11. Another encouragement given to

Israel in addition to the omnipotence of God, is, that God had declared openly (19) the promises given to Israel and to their fathers, to the fulfilment of which his justice and holiness were committed. What his power, previously introduced, enabled him to do, his truth required him to do. Some suppose that the Almighty contrasts here between his manner of proclaiming truth, and the mysterious and ambiguous responses of the ancient heathen oracles, who occupied caves, and spake from secret and dark places of the earth. Another encouragement to Israel is the declaration that their alienation from God lay with them, not with him. He had never said unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye my face in vain;—language which implies, according to the Hebrew idiom, that he had, to the very uttermost, encouraged them to seek him. And in regard to all that he had already said or promised, he reasserts that he spoke what was right and true.

20, 21. *Assemble yourselves and come ; draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations : they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god (or, El) that cannot save. Tell ye, and bring them near ; yea, let them take counsel together : who hath declared this from ancient time ? who hath told it from that time ? have not I the Lord ? and there is no God else besides me ; a just God and a Saviour ; there is none besides me.*

The Almighty is now represented as addressing those of the nations who shall survive the national judgments of that period when he shall judge among the nations, and rebuke many people, asserting, what will then be made manifest, the ignorance and folly of idolaters, and appealing to them (21) whether their false gods had foretold the momentous events that are then transacted, whether he alone had not foretold them from the beginning, and thus demonstrated that he was the only true God. The clause, “a just God and a Saviour,” does not refer, according to the popular idea, to the character of God in the work of the sinner’s salvation, in punishing sin in the person of Christ, and thereby saving the sinner. The context requires that it be under-

stood in connexion with Israel's national deliverance at last. Then God will appear just in his judgments on the sinful nations of the earth in the terrible day of his wrath, and yet be the Saviour of all who look to him ; or he will appear just in the protracted judgments with which he shall have visited his ancient people, and yet be their Saviour in that day when they shall at last seek his face. It is in relation to the same events, and with no reference whatever to the penal and propitiatory sufferings of Christ, that the similar passage in Ps. lxxxv. 10, occurs : " Mercy and truth are met together." The import of the passage is the same as that of several which precede, xli. 21 ; xliii. 9. In these cases, as in this, the invitation to Gentile nations is represented as following the final establishment of Israel in their own land.

22-25. *Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth ; for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say (or, he shall say of me), In the Lord have I (or, is all) righteousness (or, righteousnesses) and strength : even to him shall men come ; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed. In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.*

The appeal to the escaped of the nations, who survive the day of national judgments, to consider whether the dealings of God with Jew and Gentile then do not prove that the Lord is God, is followed by an invitation addressed to all flesh—to the ends of the earth—to look unto the Lord, and be saved ; for by the deliverance of Israel and the destruction of their enemies, he had shown that he was God alone. This conversion of all the earth to himself, for the promotion of his glory, he has resolved on (23). The word that it shall be so, the thing being in itself right, has passed the lips of him whose yea is yea, and is not to be recalled. The expression " I have sworn," which is a figurative one, borrowed from the customs of man—customs which are adapted to his necessities—implies that



the declaration carried with it all the solemnity and obligation of an oath. The passage is quoted by Paul, who substitutes "As I live." In like manner the expressions, "every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear," imply that God will have yielded to him at last that honour and allegiance which these actions indicate among men. The appeal of the Lord made then, in circumstances of such solemnity, enforced, as it will be, by such illustrations of his power in punishing his enemies, and of his love in blessing his people, is not in vain—his purpose stands;—men shall say that in the Lord they have righteousness and strength—the full remedy that they need for their spiritual disease, the imputed righteousness of Christ for their justification, the indwelling strength of the Spirit for their sanctification.—"To him shall men come" (24). This expresses the universal conversion of men to Christ. His word then shall not return unto him void, but it shall accomplish that which he pleases, lv. 11. The last clause, "all that are (or, rather, all that were) incensed against him shall be ashamed," may refer to the condition of the enemies of the Lord, which is introduced again, to make brighter by the contrast, the blessedness of Israel; or it may describe the new feelings excited in the breasts of those who were before his enemies, but who now embrace his righteousness, ceasing from their rebellion, and ashamed of their sin. It may describe, in short, their repentance. The chapter concludes leaving Israel, who still go about to establish their own righteousness, justified in that of Christ, and glorying in him upon whom they now spit. The songs of praise which they will then take up have been repeatedly noticed; see chapters xii., xvii. The following one makes their justification through the righteousness of Christ the subject of their glorying: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness," xxxi. 10.

## CHAPTER XLVI.

THE prophet now returns to the subject of the previous chapter from which he had digressed, viz., the destruction of Babylon, which is expressed by the removal of her idols (1, 2). The goodness of God to Israel, and his superiority over idols, are then described (3-11), and a promise is given of the final glory of the nation (12, 13).

1, 2. *Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth ; their idols were upon the beasts, and upon the cattle : your carriages were heavy loaden ; they are a burden to the weary beast. They stoop ; they bow down together ; they could not deliver the burden, but themselves (or, their souls) are gone into captivity.*

Bel—called also Belus or Baal—and Nebo were the names of the two chief gods of Babylon and the neighbouring kingdoms. It is generally supposed that the sun was worshipped under the name of Bel, called by the Greek and Roman writers, Jupiter Belus—a different deity, it has been maintained, from Jupiter Capitolinus ; not the chief god of the ancient heathen, but the planet Jupiter. The frequency with which the names of Bel and Nebo enter into the names of the kings of Babylon, as in Belshazzar, Nebuchadnezzar, shows the estimation in which they were held. The temple of Bel was much famed, forming, as it did, one of the most magnificent buildings in Babylon. A detailed account of its wealth and splendour is given by Herodotus. Its ruins still form a conspicuous object.—While these first verses predict the destruction of Babylon, they do not point particularly, or at all, to its capture by Cyrus, as there is no reason to

suppose that on that occasion the idols of the Babylonians were removed. On the contrary, as previously stated, he endeavoured to preserve the city in the magnificence in which he found it. The temples were, however, pillaged by Xerxes, and afterwards by Ptolemy Euergetes, who carried off no fewer than 2500 idols; and, no doubt, when, on different occasions, the inhabitants were banished from the city by their oppressors, they would transport their idols with them. It appears to be to this circumstance that the description of the prophet applies, in which the chief idols are represented as being humbled, bowing down, stooping; and the beasts of burden as wearied with their load; and the carriages filled by the lesser and more numerous idols which they are engaged in transporting. The last clause is understood by some to refer to the inhabitants whom the idols should have protected, but to whom they were a burden, requiring protection themselves, instead of affording it. Others more naturally refer it to the load of images on the cattle. Or it may refer, generally, as in the next verse probably, to the calamity inflicted on the city or citizens, which is so often designated a burden. The original is simply "a burden to the weary." Instead of delivering themselves or their worshippers, the idols themselves are captives (2). The word "burden" here may be understood in its common sense of calamity, or in its literal sense of load—the load of images which the imaginary gods, Bel and Nebo, could not save, though representatives of themselves.

3, 4. *Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb: and even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.*

Pointing to the worthlessness of the gods of Babylon in the time of need, God contrasts with their insufficiency his tender care and effectual help to Israel, towards whom

he had acted the part of a mother to her offspring (3), and of a son to an aged parent (4). He had carried Israel in her infancy, and in her old age he would not forsake her. Similar language, implying affection and care, is employed in other places: "He bare them and carried them all the days of old," lxiii. 9; "I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms," Hos. xi. 3; "As the eagle fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead him," Deut. xxxii. 11, 12. Babylon had to burden herself with her gods; but the Lord burdened himself with Israel. From the expression "the remnant of the house of Israel," and the allusion to old age and hoary hairs, it appears that the period of Israel's history specially intended is the same as in previous chapters, viz., that connected with their return to their country and their God.

5-7. *To whom will ye liken me, and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be like? They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, and hire a goldsmith, and he maketh it a god (or, El): they fall down; yea, they worship. They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him, and set him in his place, and he standeth; from his place shall he not remove: yea, one shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble.*

The description of idol-making which follows, like those which have already occurred, xl. 18, 25, is intended to throw ridicule upon the system. The import of the 5th verse appears to be, What would adequately represent the Almighty, who had dealt so tenderly and powerfully with Israel? The same idea is expressed more fully when it is said, "Who in the heavens can be compared unto the Lord? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord?" Ps. lxxxix. 6. It is in language of keen satire that it is said, the material of the idol was before shut up in a bag (6); it is put into a balance and weighed; it is given into the hands of a workman, and then the thing is worshipped. And what is it after it is made? It



cannot walk, but must be carried (7) ; it cannot ascend to its throne, but must be lifted up ; it cannot come down, cannot speak, cannot deliver.

8-11. *Remember this, and shew yourselves men ; bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors. Remember the former things of old : for I am God (or, El), and there is none else ; I am God, and there is none like me ; declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure : calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel (or, the man of my counsel), from a far country : yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass ; I have purposed it, I will also do it.*

The absurdity of idolatry having been exposed in the most contemptuous strain, the Jews are urged to remember and to consider these words of the Lord concerning it, and to act not like children, regarding such foolery, but like men, despising it. But while the weakness of idols is made manifest, the evidence of the truth and majesty of the Almighty is also set before the Jews (9, 10). The argument is the same as that which has occurred in repeated recent instances, see chapters xli., xliii., xlv. The dealings of God with Israel in her infancy, her deliverance from Egypt, from the host of Pharaoh, from the dangers of the terrible wilderness, from Babylon, the illustration which the prophet is engaged in giving,—these former things which they are urged to remember (9), all proved the power and friendship of God, proved his superiority to idols. And his foretelling, from the beginning of their history, events to come (10), Deut. xxx., xxxii., and his saying, what nothing created, not even man or angel, can say in truth, “My counsel shall stand,” proved that he was God, and none else. The allusion in the following verse (11) is generally supposed to be to Cyrus ; and were the passage a detached one this might be the most natural interpretation of it. This opinion quite agrees with the exposition given of the chapter, as the passage may be regarded not as tying down the whole

chapter to the deliverance from Babylon, but as furnishing an illustration of the divine power and care for Israel—as constituting one of the “former things” to which their attention is called, and would be profitably directed at any period of their trials, but particularly at that of their final judgments. But the passage is apparently the counterpart of xli. 2: “Who raised up the righteous man from the east, called him to his foot, gave the nations before him,”—which has been understood of the coming of Christ,—or of an instrument employed by him,—to the judgment of the nations, preparatory to the establishment of righteousness on earth. The position of the passage in this chapter, which does not relate particularly to the capture of Babylon by Cyrus, the idols not being removed then, but which relates to the “remnant” of the house of Israel, an expression which is applied pre-eminently to those who are left in the last days—to such as shall be gathered from their wanderings and spared from their judgments,—which relates also to the hoar hair, the old age of the nation,—this position of the verse, followed as it is by a description of the final conversion of Israel—every circumstance connecting it with events long subsequent to the time of Cyrus—seems to require that it also be understood of Christ when he comes to judge among the nations, and to reign in Zion. The figure of a ravenous bird<sup>1</sup> corresponds with the character in which he shall then visit the nations: “He shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies: I will destroy and devour at once,” xlii. 13, 14.

12, 13. *Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness: I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory.*

The chapter concludes with a call to Israel to cease

<sup>1</sup> Ravenous bird is rendered by Lowth and others the eagle, chiefly from the coincidence between the Hebrew אֵיט, ayit, and the Greek αἶτος, actos, an eagle.

from their unbelief, and an assurance of their near and final salvation. They are addressed as stout-hearted, a character of which the Lord often complains: "They refused to hearken; yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law; therefore cometh a great wrath from the Lord of hosts," Zech. vii. 11, 12; "Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord," Mal. iii. 13. This stoutness of heart, which indicates a greater degree of depravity than the natural insensibility of the heart,—which implies resistance to, kicking against, the law of God, like the resistance of the bullock unaccustomed to the yoke—is the contrary of that brokenness of heart with which the Lord is well-pleased; and therefore those who are characterized by it are far from righteousness, or, taking the word in its literal meaning, from what is right. This was a feature of Jewish character in the days of our Lord. But yet God would come to them both with righteousness and with salvation—as a just God, and yet a Saviour. The term "righteousness" is often applied to the dealings of God with Jew and Gentile in the last days, indicating that he will be just or righteous both in punishing his enemies and in blessing his people Israel. It may be so understood here. Or, more simply, it may be regarded as expressing the personal character of Israel, as in the preceding verse, or the general prevalence of righteousness, as in the following passage: "The Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations," lxi. 11. The word "salvation" may be understood either of deliverance from temporal calamities or from spiritual blindness, or from both. Zion will be the spot in which both will be found when the Lord shall place them there. Then the purpose for which Israel was separated from among the nations will be fully answered. The Lord will be glorified in them, see xliii. 7: "Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in

Israel," xliv. 23 ; "Thy people shall be all righteous ; they shall inherit the land for ever, that I may be glorified," lx. 2.

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## CHAPTER XLVII.

THIS chapter is occupied with a prophetic account of the downfal of Babylon, under the figure of a female reduced from an exalted station to the performance of the most menial offices, to the lowest degradation. Although expressions in the description apply to the capture of the city by Cyrus, yet as a whole it does not do so : all its terms were not fulfilled on that occasion, when the city did not experience that abasement which is foretold here, but, on the contrary, existed long after in undiminished splendour. It must therefore be understood of her gradual downfal, which was not effected until after repeated shocks, of which the attack of Cyrus was the first. It is a general prophecy of her fate.

1-5. *Come down, and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon ; sit on the ground : there is no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans ; for thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate. Take the millstones, and grind meal : uncover thy locks, make bare the leg, uncover the thigh, pass over the rivers. Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen : I will take vengeance, and I will not meet thee as a man. As for our Redeemer, the Lord of hosts is his name, the Holy One of Israel. Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans : for thou shalt no more be called, The lady of kingdoms.*

These verses represent the downfal of Babylon by the comparison of a female reduced from the enjoyment of the luxuries and elegancies of high station to servitude and shame. The exchange of a throne for a seat in the dust marks well the change which has passed on Babylon, which from being one of the greatest cities on which



the sun ever shone, has become a mass of silent and long undiscovered ruins. This is further expressed by the noble female being represented as reduced to the degradation of grinding meal (2), which in the East was a household duty, performed with the hand by female slaves; and as exposed to indignities, and placed in a position in which only women of the lowest ranks are to be found in the East, where the concealment of the head and the whole person is carried to such an extent. The exact import of several of the expressions employed is not very clear; but the degradation which they represent is not greater than that which has befallen Babylon and its inhabitants, and which has made it for ages a monument of the divine vengeance (3). Its nakedness and shame are now seen. In the expression "I will not meet a man," the verb signifies to meet, whether with hostile or friendly intentions. Hence it has received a variety of interpretations. The most general are, either "I will not spare one," or "I will not suffer one to intercede;" expressing equally the doom of Babylon. Isaiah seeing in prophetic vision the downfall of this enemy of Israel, bursts forth (4) as if in the name of his countrymen, into an exclamation of grateful praise to him who, while he was the terrible judge of Babylon, was the Redeemer and God of Israel. The previous subject is then resumed (5), and silence and darkness, expressive signs of mourning, fraught with terrible judgment to a city which was called the lady of kingdoms, are predicted as the portion of Babylon. The titles of the city—"the daughter of the Chaldeans" or Babylonians, and "the lady of kingdoms," denote, the one, the pride with which the inhabitants of the country regarded so magnificent a capital; the other, the high position which she occupied as the chief city of the greatest empire of the world; and contrast strongly with what she was to be, and what she has become.

6-8. *I was wroth with my people; I have polluted mine inheritance,*

*and given them into thine hand : thou didst shew them no mercy ; upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke. And thou saidst, I shall be a lady for ever : so that thou didst not lay these things to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end of it. Therefore hear now this, thou that art given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly ; that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else besides me ; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children.*

The causes of her judgments are next stated. One is her severity to Israel. Israel for her sins was to become the captive of Babylon, but her treatment by that people is described as being marked by cruelty and oppression. Thus while acting unconsciously as the instrument of punishing sin, Babylon was sinning and accumulating wrath for herself. "I have polluted (or profaned) mine inheritance," describes the degradation of Israel, as in xliii. 28. "Laying the yoke upon the ancient" or aged, teaches how merciless their tyranny was, since not even the aged were exempted. So also in Lam. iv. 16 ; v. 12. Her proud self-confidence (7) formed another cause of offence in the eye of God. Everything in her position augured favourably for her perpetuity. Such a capital of such a kingdom appeared to bid defiance to decay. But the vastness and power of her empire, which should have moved her all the more to look to God to preserve to her what he had given, excited that pride which goes before a fall ; but her self-confidence and the issue of it she did not lay to heart. A third cause of her judgments is said to be her pursuit of pleasures (8). This character belonged more or less to all the heathen cities of antiquity. Their prosperity has always been the mother of licentiousness ; and abundant as have been the dissipation and sensuality of other capitals, in no case has the catalogue of vices been more foul than in that of Babylon, according to the testimony of Herodotus and others. Hence she is made the symbol of the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth, Rev. xvii. 5. She was given to pleasures. Her proud self-confidence is again adverted to. She defied calamity.

9-11. *But these two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon thee in their perfection, for the multitude of thy sorceries, and for the great abundance of thine enchantments. For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness: thou hast said, None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee (or, caused thee to turn away); and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none else besides me. Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth (or, the morning thereof): and mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it off (or, expiate): and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know.*

For these things, for her oppression of Israel, for her pride, for her licentiousness, it is declared that judgment would overwhelm Babylon. Its suddenness and completeness are described. The wife deprived at once of husband and children, widowed and made childless in one day, is a touching illustration of utter bereavement; and such would be the condition of Babylon. Many understand by this double calamity the loss of kings and people. It would come upon her when engaged in the midst of her sorceries or magical incantations.<sup>1</sup> This formed another cause of offence and of judgment. How prevalent the custom was among the nations of the East is well known. Babylon is charged with it likewise in ver. 12, and in other parts of Scripture. Thus, in the book of Daniel, it is said that "Nebuchadnezzar found Daniel and his companions better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm," i. 20; ii. 10. Other sins are laid to her charge, that of trusting in her wickedness (10), in her pride, in her incantations: "Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness," Ps. lii. 7. Alexander translates the first clause, "thou art secure in thy wickedness," which agrees well with what follows. The clause "they said none seeth me," implies the denial of the divine omnipresence

<sup>1</sup> For the multitude, כָּלֵב, literally, in the multitude.

and omniscience, which is marked out as a heinous sin : “ Woe unto them whose works are in the dark, and who say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?” xxix. 15. The expression “ wisdom and knowledge,” which it is said would prove a snare, seems to refer to their acquaintance with astronomical science, in which it is well known that the acquisitions of the Babylonians were very remarkable ; and also to the subject of astrology and divination generally to which they paid so much attention. Of their acquirements in these matters, real or imaginary, they would be doubtless boastful. On account of those vices which have been enumerated, their oppression of Israel, their licentiousness, their contempt of God, &c., would their calamities come upon them (11), so sure as the dawn of morning<sup>1</sup> (margin) ; so just that no sacrifice on their part would avert them (margin) ; and so sudden that they would not be anticipated.

12, 13. *Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth ; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail. Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers (or, viewers of the heavens), the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators (or, that give knowledge concerning the months), stand up and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee.*

The nation is here addressed in that ironical strain which occurs so frequently in this portion of Isaiah, and is urged in the prospect of their disasters to betake themselves to their enchantments if they could deliver them. The clause, “ wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth,” points out how early the Chaldeans devoted themselves to the study of the art of magic, and with what energy they pursued it. Their diviners were very numerous, and were divided into different classes, some of which are enumerated (13), and all are tauntingly urged to deliver Babylon if they could. The distinctions of these various

<sup>1</sup> From whence it riseth, literally, dawn of it, from צֶמַח, the morning light, dawn, Is. xiv. 12.



classes, and indeed the nature of astrology generally, a science which pretended to determine events on earth from the phases of the heavenly bodies, are not accurately ascertained. The three classes enumerated here are generally supposed to be—1. Those who divided the heavens for the purpose of auguries ; 2. Those who judged from the appearances, the conjunctions, the colour, &c., of the stars ; and, 3. Those who foretold what events might be expected in the course of each month. The term astrologers occurs only here. It signifies literally, dividers of the heavens.

14, 15. *Behold, they shall be as stubble, the fire shall burn them : they shall not deliver themselves (or, their souls) from the power of the flame : there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it. Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast laboured, even thy merchants, from thy youth : they shall wander every one to his quarter ; none shall save thee.*

So far, however, is it said, would its diviners be from delivering Babylon, that, although so numerous, they would be themselves consigned to destruction so utter that but as the ashes of stubble would remain, nothing sufficient, like a coal, to give heat or form a fire. And as little would the merchants of Babylon avail her (15). It was to commerce that she owed her greatness, and no doubt many foreigners traded with her ; but though these had raised her to her proud elevation, they would not be able to avert her downfall, and would leave her to her fate. The ruins of the city are the proof that none—neither her diviners nor her merchants—were able to save her.

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## CHAPTER XLVIII.

THIS chapter consists chiefly of complaints against Israel for her sins—sins which were aggravated by her

privileges—mingled up with remonstrances against them as offences in the eye of the Lord, of whose truth and majesty it contains many assertions and illustrations. It resembles previous chapters, in so far as it illustrates the character of God by referring to past events foretold and accomplished by him, particularly to those which are introduced on similar occasions, the deliverances from Babylon and Egypt.

1, 2. *Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah ; which swear by the name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth, nor in righteousness. For they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel ; The Lord of hosts is his name.*

The chapter commences with a charge against Israel of insincerity and hypocrisy. It is the same complaint which is made with greater detail in the beginning of Isaiah : “ To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me ? bring no more vain oblations,” &c., i. 11-15. With all their privileges as the favoured people of God, and with all their strong professions of devotedness to him, expressed by swearing by his name, they did not serve him in truth and righteousness. In the expression “ are come forth out of the waters of Judah,” that tribe is represented as the fountainhead from which the other tribes sprung. The same figure is used in other instances, as in Ps. lxxviii. 26 (margin). Of the pre-eminence of Judah over the other tribes, Alexander remarks, “ From him the Messiah was expected to descend. To him the first rank was assigned in the exodus, the journey through the desert, and the occupation of the promised land. In his line the royal power was first permanently established. To him, though deserted by five-sixths of the tribes, the honours and privileges of the theocracy were still continued.” Insincere as they were, Israel is charged with claiming the privileges promised to the nation, not in its

backsliding and rebellious, but in its faithful condition, calling themselves of the holy city, and relying, in their way, on the God of Israel. What is here meant by "staying upon God," is seen from the following passage: "Shew my people their transgression;—yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they take delight in approaching to God," lviii. 1, 2. This has clearly been a feature of the Jewish character. They have claimed and gloried in their privileges as the favoured of God, after the conditions on which they possessed these privileges had ceased to be fulfilled.

3-5. *I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth, and I shewed them; I did them suddenly, and they came to pass. Because I knew that thou art obstinate (or, hard), and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass; I have even from the beginning declared it to thee; before it came to pass I shewed it thee: lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol hath done them; and my graven image, and my molten image, hath commanded them.*

The Lord is here represented as narrating what he had done in order to counteract the idolatrous tendencies of the nation, and to convince them that the God of Israel was the only true God.<sup>1</sup> He appeals to the Divine prerogative of foretelling future events in proof of his claim to being God alone. The former events of Israel's history—and the whole Bible history of Israel is a succession of prophecies and their fulfilment—their possession of Canaan, for example, their bondage in Egypt, their wanderings in the wilderness, had all been foretold, and had all come to pass. The obstinacy of Israel in refusing the yoke of God, which is easy, is described (4) in language borrowed from the refusal of its yoke by the bullock. The expression "the brow brass," denotes the insensibility, the want of shame, the unblushing effrontery, with which the nation pursued sin. The same charge is often

<sup>1</sup> "I shewed them," from שָׁמַע, to hear, in Hiphil, to cause to be heard, to make known.

brought against Israel: "Ye stout-hearted," they are called; "They refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear," Zech. vii. 10, 12. In order to meet their headstrong resistance to his word, the Lord had told them beforehand the events that would befall their nation (5), that they might not attribute to idols what the foreknowledge of them proved to be the work of the one true God. If there was one sin more than another against which Israel was warned, it was that of idolatry; and yet such was their perverseness, that if there was one sin more than another of which they were guilty, it was this. The Divine jealousy of idols is often declared: "I am the Lord, and my glory will I not give to another; neither my praise to graven images," xlii. 8.

6-8. *Thou hast heard, see all this: and will not ye declare it? I have shewed thee new things from this time, even hidden things, and thou didst not know them. They are created now, and not from the beginning; even before the day when thou heardest them not; lest thou shouldest say, Behold, I knew them. Yea, thou heardest not; yea, thou knewest not; yea, from that time that thine ear was not opened: for I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb.*

The Lord now appeals to Israel, whether, having heard the former things which he had foretold, and having seen them fulfilled, they would not acknowledge that such was the case; and that he was, therefore, the only God. But he would do even more than he had done. He had furnished past illustrations of his divinity, now he declared to them new events, events before unknown to them, which, in so far as their knowledge went, did not exist before, were created now (7), which they had not heard of until then, so that they could not say they knew them. The new things referred to are, it may be supposed, those of the whole prophecy, of which this chapter forms a part; and the passage may be understood as a warning



intended for the nation at all times, but particularly at the time to which this prophecy, perhaps, specially looks, when the recovery of Israel shall be drawing near. It was quite in point at the time when Isaiah prophesied. The Jews had seen the fulfilment of many prophecies previous to that time, more than enough to vindicate the claim of the God of Israel to the title of the only God, and more than enough to render the impenitence of the nation without excuse ; but not enough, even then, to exhaust the forbearance of God : he would advance fresh proof, he would add line upon line, and, through the prophet, he declared new things—new events which were to be unfolded in their future history. These are chiefly the termination of the protracted judgments under which they have so long lain, and the bright morning which shall succeed so long and dark a night. All the arguments of God, all the fulfilment of predictions witnessed by them, are declared to have been to no purpose (8) ; his word and providence spoke to closed ears, to a treacherous people. How faithful a picture does this expression give of the conduct of Israel toward the Almighty ! How often in the Bible history of that people, from the beginning, from the womb of the nation, did they break their covenant engagements ! How short-lived did even the amendment which followed their trials prove, and how false their promises !—The adoption of the word *that*, as marked in italics, in the clause “from that time *that* thine ear was not opened,” is unfortunate. The meaning is, as given by Lowth, “From the first thine ear was not opened to receive them.”

9-11. *For my name's sake will I defer mine anger, and for my praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off. Behold, I have refined thee, but not with (or, for) silver ; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it : for how should my name be polluted ? and I will not give my glory unto another.*

The treachery of Israel more than merited the fate that

has befallen contemporary kingdoms ; but although not for their sakes, but for his own glory, God declares that he would exercise long-suffering,<sup>1</sup> and not cut them off. That this is the primary and ultimate object of all God's dealings with Israel is often declared. The forbearance here referred to is not limited in the text, and has not indeed been limited to any one period of Israel's existence ; and may, therefore, be understood of her general history, both past and to come. She is not yet cut off, and it is the long-suffering of God which has been ever her salvation. The means by which her recovery will be at last effected will be judgment (10). The weight of evidence (in seeing the events of her history foretold and accomplished as foretold) has not effected it ; the Divine forbearance has not done it : this she has returned with treachery ; but where these have failed judgment will succeed. So it is often foretold, see i. 25. This is one of the new things that is declared : " Who may abide the day of his coming ? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap : and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver : and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness," Mal. iii. 2, 3. The expression " not with silver" has been variously understood. It is translated literally in the common version. To render it " not as silver," that is, not effectually, is to contradict the second clause. The most natural view of it is, to understand the meaning of the whole passage to be, that their allegiance would not be gained easily and agreeably, as a thing is which may be got for money ; but would be extorted from them by judgment—would be effected by fire, not by silver. However terrible the means, yet the result, the conversion of Israel, would promote that most sacred end, the glory of him who alone

<sup>1</sup> " Refrain" is, in the original, very expressive, from מַעֲנֶה, to make an animal tractable by muzzling it.

is God (11). This end must be eventually answered in the case of Israel, as in every other. However long that nation has polluted the name by which they are called, and robbed God of his glory, his perfections require that it be not so always.

12-15. *Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I am he; I am the first, I also am the last. Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned (or, the palm of my right hand hath spread out) the heavens: when I call unto them, they stand up together. All ye, assemble yourselves, and hear; which among them hath declared these things? The Lord hath loved him: he will do his pleasure on Babylon, and his arm shall be on the Chaldeans. I, even I, have spoken; yea, I have called him: I have brought him, and he shall make his way prosperous.*

The assertions of the eternity (12) and omnipotence (13) of God are introduced here in the same way as in preceding passages (xliiii., xliv., xlv., &c.), viz., to declare to Israel the infinite superiority of the true God over every other, in order that they might receive his word, and trust in his power. In proof of his supremacy, the predicted punishment of Babylon by Cyrus is adduced (14), as on previous occasions (xliiii., xliv., xlv., &c.), which Israel is invited to listen to,—a thing which was impossible by man, which Jehovah alone could foretell. The expression “among them,” may be understood either of the Gentiles generally, or by a change of the personal pronoun, as is common, of the Jews. The expression “hath loved him” (Cyrus), must be understood in a qualified sense, like some of the other language that is applied to him, as the shepherd, the anointed of the Lord. It here indicates the favour shown him by God, in selecting and prospering him as he did, as the instrument of delivering his people. In regard to the clause “he shall make his way prosperous,” there is the alternative of considering Cyrus to be here represented as doing for himself what God did for him, or of supposing a change of person from the first to the third—of I the Lord, to He the Lord.

16. *Come ye near unto me, hear ye this ; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning ; from the time that it was, there am I : and now the Lord God (or, Adonai Jehovah), and his Spirit, hath sent me.*

Another appeal is made to Israel, whether the Lord had not sufficient claims upon their belief and confidence, since his predictions had extended so far back and had been so public. It is not clear to what "beginning" allusion is here made. Judging from the third verse, it is to the beginning of the national existence of Israel. It has been disputed who the speaker is in the last clause of the verse, some maintaining that it is the prophet. The preceding clauses evidently point to God as the speaker ; and the same expressions are so applied in other places. It is more natural to understand the last clause as limiting the speaker to the second person of the Godhead, than to introduce the prophet in so abrupt a manner. The second person of the Godhead is represented in other places as being sent as the Deliverer of Israel, with reference particularly to their final deliverance : "The Lord hath sent me to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God," lxi. 1 ; "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion : for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord : and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto thee," Zech. ii. 10, 11. The words "and his Spirit," are ambiguous in the original, it being uncertain whether it is nominative to, or is governed by the verb, "has sent"—whether the clause should be read, the Lord and his Spirit have sent me, or, the Lord hath sent me and his Spirit. The latter is the order in the original, and seems preferable on other accounts. While a rod out of the stem of Jesse was promised for the salvation of Israel, it was also promised that the Spirit of the Lord should rest upon him, xi. 12. The passage is best explained by connecting it with the future deliverances to be wrought by Christ for Israel, the prophecy passing from the less to the



greater. These are always spoken of in connexion with the second person of the Godhead, the Messiah. It is he who is to reign on earth, and it is he who arranges, and shall execute the intermediate steps towards the establishment of his kingdom.

17-19. *Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel ; I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go. Oh that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments ! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea : thy seed also had been as the sand, and the offspring of thy bowels like the gravel thereof ; his name should not have been cut off nor destroyed from before me.*

The Lord here asserts his knowledge of what was best for Israel, his anxious wish that they had consulted their highest interests, and his power to confer the “ best gifts,” which, while he forbids the coveting of earthly pleasures and possessions, he enjoins all men to covet earnestly. He only could show them what was for their benefit, and guide them aright. He is represented as lamenting (18) their infatuation in refusing his service, and thus forfeiting the blessings intended for them. Had they hearkened to him, and not followed the impulses of proud and deceitful hearts, instead of their disasters they would have had peace, like a river ever flowing and ever full—deep and abundant ; and righteousness unending, like the waves of the sea, ever rolling, never intermitting ; and instead of their reduced numbers, and their standing as a nation lost, they would have been as the sand (19), and their national name preserved. The same illustration of divine compassion often occurs ; the same affectionate and mournful lament is often made for Israel : “ O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever,” Deut. v. 29 ; “ O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end !” Deut. xxxii. 29 ; “ Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel

had walked in my ways, I should soon have subdued their enemies !" Ps. lxxx. 13 ; " O Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, and ye would not !" Mat. xxiii. 37. The declaration made in Isaiah is a general one, applicable to the circumstances of Israel during the greater part of her history, but naturally referring chiefly to their state after the destruction of Jerusalem. All that is here depicted will yet be realized when Israel shall hearken to the commandments of the Lord : " Great shall be the peace of thy children ;" " In righteousness shalt thou be established ;" " I will extend peace to her like a river ;" " Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered."

20-22. *Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans, with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth ; say ye, The Lord hath redeemed his servant Jacob. And they thirsted not when he led them through the deserts : he caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them ; he clave the rock also, and the waters gushed out. There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked.*

There are added what may be regarded as two illustrations of what had been declared of the power of the God of Israel, and of his peculiar favour for his people—the one prophetic of their deliverance from Babylon ; the other past when Isaiah prophesied, viz., their deliverance from the dangers of the great and terrible wilderness in their way from Egypt to Canaan. The former of these illustrations of divine power and protection is adduced on previous occasions. The language of the 20th verse may perhaps be regarded as giving too high coloured a description of the circumstances that marked the return from Babylon in the time of Cyrus ; that event scarcely seems to come up to its exuberant details, and may yet receive a more remarkable fulfilment. And what supports this idea is, that there is a very exact coincidence between this passage and the songs of thanksgiving to be yet sung by Israel, see xiv. 4. On this supposition the following

verse (21)—which may, however, also be regarded as a separate illustration of divine power, that of Israel's safe passage through the desert—may be viewed not as a different illustration, but as a continuation of the same. In the other cases, where the deliverance from Babylon is appealed to as illustrative of Almighty power, the second illustration with which it is connected is not the deliverance from the perils of the desert, but from the dangers of the Red Sea, xliii. 14, 17; so that there is no argument from analogy in favour of the application of this verse to the passage through the desert. If it be regarded as a continuation of the previous verse, it does not appear from anything recorded to have received a literal fulfilment in the return from Babylon. It may, therefore, receive, like the previous verse, a yet future accomplishment. That such events as it describes will yet take place in connexion with Israel's final return is often stated very clearly. It is said, for example, in the following passage, which is not limited to the land of Judea, but in connexion with the way by which the ransomed of the Lord (Israel) shall return and come to Zion, "that in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert: and the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water," xxxv. 6, 7. The concluding assertion (22) may be regarded as in contrast with that in verse 18; while peace, like a river, is promised to hearkening to God's commandments—to those who do not—to the wicked, there is no peace. This axiom in morals, while true of individuals, is here uttered of Israel as a nation. And how has it held good in her case? What a contrast to peace does her national career present, from the hour she ceased to hearken to the commandments of the God of Israel. How much truth, as well as poetry, is there in the description of her: "Tribe of the wandering foot and weary breast." But connecting the verse with the future history of Israel, the clause is still

more significant. When Israel shall sing, The Lord hath redeemed his servant Jacob ; when streams shall spring up in the desert for her ; the indignation of the Lord shall be upon her enemies ;—they shall call on the mountains to cover them ;—sinners shall be consumed out of the earth.

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## CHAPTER XLIX.

THE previous part of this prophecy consists in a great measure of predictions regarding Babylon, introduced however, it appears, more as illustrative of what Israel may yet expect from God, than as the main subject of prediction, and mingled up with many obvious references to the establishment of Christ's kingdom in Israel and in the earth. What follows relates generally to this subject, and forms the most sublime and interesting portion of Isaiah. This chapter describes the appointment of Christ as Redeemer both of Jew and Gentile, and foretells various details of the restoration, conversion, and prosperity of Israel.

1-3. *Listen, O isles, unto me ; and hearken, ye people, from far ; the Lord hath called me from the womb ; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name. And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword ; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft ; in his quiver hath he hid me ; and said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.*

The chapter opens with an invitation to all the earth to give heed to the commission of Christ to a particular work, which is announced in a future verse (6) to be that of carrying salvation to all flesh. The passage presents a difficulty which has caused much discussion, the solution of which is, however, more difficult than important, viz., what party is introduced as speaking in the early part of



the chapter, whether Christ or the Jewish nation ; for the supposition of its being the prophet, or Cyrus, or the body of the prophets, is untenable. In the fifth verse and subsequently, it is certainly the Messiah who speaks, for his office is said to be to bring Israel again to God ; but who is the speaker in the previous verses ? The passage generally is applicable either to Christ or the Jews ; to the former as the author of those national judgments that yet await the earth, to the latter as the instrument of them ;—still there are difficulties in the way of either application. Against that to the Jews, there are the objections, that they are never represented as addressing the nations of the earth, as in the first verse, “listen unto me ;” and that a change of the speaker is then required in the fifth verse, where there is nothing to indicate a change. And against the application to Christ, there is the obvious objection that, in the third verse, the speaker is called Israel. This, however, is the only one, and the unity of the whole passage seems to require this application. The opening invocation is evidently the parallel of that in chap. xli. 1 ; li. 4 ; in which all the nations of the earth are represented as being addressed on a subject which concerned all. That Christ was called, and his name mentioned from the womb, in connexion with the subjects of this chapter, appears from what is recorded by the evangelists, Matthew and Luke. By the latter, his predicted birth is connected with his reign in righteousness over Israel : “The angel said unto me, fear thou not, Mary ; behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest ; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David : and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever,” i. 31-33. The qualifications of Christ for his appointed office are then described (2). He is represented as having received a mouth like a sharp sword, as being

a polished shaft or arrow, a description which does not suit his character at his first coming as priest, but answers to the character of his second coming as king. From the comparison of similar passages, it indicates his commission to execute judgment on the nations of the earth, which is so often represented as preceding the period of universal righteousness and peace. Thus, in reference to that season of judgment, it is said: "The Lord hath anointed me to proclaim the day of vengeance of our God," lxi. 2; "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O thou most mighty. Thine arrows are sharp in the hearts of the king's enemies," Ps. xlv. 3-5; "Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations," Rev. xix. 15. But while thus commissioned to act as judge, there is a season of delay announced. The weapon lies for a time in the hand of God—the arrow remains in the quiver. Such may be the meaning of the clause, "In the shadow of his hand hath he hid me." This agrees with the present lengthened season of respite and of peace—called elsewhere "the acceptable *year* of the Lord," a long period—which precedes the season of national judgment, which, in comparison of the year of delay, is but a day—a short season—"the *day* of vengeance of our God." This hiding of the arrow in the quiver agrees with what is said in other places: "I have long holden my peace," see xviii. 4. These two verses are also, however, strictly applicable to Israel; the one fulfilled in the promises given to Abraham, the other descriptive of what Israel will be as the instrument in God's hands of punishing his enemies at last, see Zech. xii. 1-8. The difficulty already alluded to now presents itself—How is Israel introduced (3) as the party speaking, who throughout the rest of the passage is Christ? The knot is cut by Lowth in this way: "That name (Israel), in its original design and full import, can only belong to him (Christ) who contended powerfully with God in behalf of mankind and

prevailed." But the name is never so used elsewhere ; and in the immediate context it occurs in its proper sense. It is a more satisfactory solution of the difficulty to regard the prophecy as passing from Christ, the author of the judgments of the nations, to Israel, the instrument of their infliction—such transitions being not uncommon in the prophet, for it is with Israel that he will thresh the nations : or as passing from the commission with which Christ was charged, to the execution of one of its chief objects, viz., the conversion of Israel, in which it is often said that God will be glorified. If understood of Christ, then the glorying of God by him was fulfilled by the pleasure of the Lord prospering in his hands ; by his whole life on earth, whose chief object was the promotion of the glory of the Father,—“I have glorified thee on the earth ;”—and will be fulfilled still more signally by the judgments of the nations at last, and the overthrow for ever of the kingdom of sin.

4-6. *Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain ; yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work (or, my reward) with my God. And now, saith the Lord that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I (or, That Israel may be gathered to him, and I may) be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength. And he said, It is a light thing (or, Art thou lighter than) that thou shouldest be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved (or, desolations) of Israel ; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.*

The Messiah is now represented as complaining of the ill success of the mission entrusted to him, which, while it included the commission to subdue the world by judgment, included also the commission to attempt it by grace ; the “acceptable year” as well as the “day of vengeance.” But while complaining of his ill success, he is also represented as regarding it as sufficient satisfaction that the cause was the Lord’s, and that he would reward (margin) his labours ; “surely my judgment (cause, that is,

as in Numb. xxvii. 5; Job xxiii. 4) is with my God." This want of success in his appointed work, which characterized in a great degree his personal ministry on earth, as well as that of his apostles and prophets and servants, before and since, is often alluded to in the sacred volume: "He shall not fail nor be discouraged till he has set judgment in the isles," implying that he would meet with much calculated to produce discouragement and failure, xlii. 4: "I have stretched out my hands all day unto a rebellious people," lxv. 2. The ground of this confidence is said to be, that he had been appointed for the very purpose of restoring Israel (5), and that however long it might be before it was effected, yet God would be pleased with his exertions for Israel's salvation, and would strengthen him for its accomplishment. Of the truth that this was the case during the ministry of our Lord on earth, it is unnecessary to adduce proof. The Father did both honour and support the Son. But there is here special reference to that protracted refusal of Christ's redemption, on the part of Israel, which still exists, but which is to be terminated by what is foretold in the following verse. The marginal reading<sup>1</sup> is still simpler. According to it, the passage announces the issue of Christ's labours, that eventually he would succeed in gathering Israel. Nay, not only had he this assurance given him, this was not all, was not enough, was a light thing (6); or was little in comparison of the reward due to such sufferings and labours as were those of Christ. The restoration of Israel<sup>2</sup> was not his full recompence, he would be made

<sup>1</sup> The difference here arises from the various readings of the Hebrew, that of the text being לֹ, *lo*, not; and that of the margin or of the Masorites being לִי, *li*, to him. The latter is well supported by several MSS., the Septuagint, the Chaldaic, &c., and is that adopted by Gesenius, Lowth, and others.

<sup>2</sup> The preserved of Israel, from נִצַּר, to guard, preserve; also to hide, as in xvi. 6. In this last sense it is very applicable to the state of the lost ten tribes of Israel.



a light also to the Gentiles, he would have given him the heathen for a heritage.

7. *Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth (or, to him that is despised in soul), to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee.*

The final success of Christ in extending his kingdom on earth is then described at greater length, 7-13. A contrast is drawn between the treatment which he would long experience, and the honour which would be paid him when in the end he would come to take unto himself the kingdom. The nation referred to in this verse is certainly the Jews, who are described similarly elsewhere, x. 6. That he was, when on earth, and that he has ever been to the present hour, the object of scorn and abhorrence to them, is too undeniable. How he was the servant of rulers in respecting every law of his adopted country, and appearing before rulers at their bidding, is also corroborated by his whole history. But in proportion to his abasement will be the honour paid to him at last, even from the hands of kings and princes: "All kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall serve him," Ps. lxxxii. 11; "As many were astonished at thee;—so shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him," lii. 14, 15.

8-10. *Thus saith the Lord, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish (or, raise up) the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages: That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves: they shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places. They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.*

The success of the Messiah is represented as being in

answer to prayer or intercession.<sup>1</sup> So it is said similarly, "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance," Ps. ii. 8. The expressions, "I helped thee," "I will preserve thee," are used, as is often the case, of Christ as man, as the human deliverer of a fallen world. The expression "the people," seems to signify the Jews, as in ch. xlii. 6. This appears not only from the individual expressions, but also from the restoration of prosperity to the land which immediately follows; from the language of the 12th verse; and from the evident connexion of the 14th verse, of which Zion is the subject, with what precedes. The fertility of the land of Judea, and the possession of the cities described in the close of this verse, are often connected with the conversion of Israel to Christ. It is then that "the Lord will comfort Zion, he will comfort all her waste places, and he will make her wilderness like Eden." The same subject is reverted to in ver. 19. To establish the earth is to raise up (margin), that is, restore, the land (of Judea). The promise of blessings through the Messiah to the land is followed by that of blessings to the people (s). In a parallel passage, xlii. 7, both Jews and Gentiles are included, and the allusion there seems to be limited to their conversion, to the removal of spiritual fetters and spiritual blindness. But in the present case, if the language be regarded as limited to the Jews, it is rather to be understood of their gathering from the nations whither they have been scattered, when it shall be said "to the north, Give up, and to the south, Keep not back." Of that nation with what truth may it be said, that they have been in prison, that they are in darkness. How true especially is this of the lost tribes. Of their restoration how applicable will be the language, that they go forth from their prison, that

<sup>1</sup> In an acceptable time, בְּזֶמֶן רָצוֹן, literally, in a time of delight, satisfaction; that is, at a time pleasing to God.

they show themselves from their darkness. But the whole is equally true of their deliverance from spiritual evils ; for, in reference to this period, it is also said, " darkness shall cover the earth, but the Lord shall arise upon thee," lx. 1 ; " As for thee, also, I have sent forth the prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water," Zech. ix. 11. The happy state of the people is then set forth by the figure of a flock feeding undisturbed in the rich and sheltered pasture that is found on the banks of an eastern river (9-10) : " I will gather them from the coasts of the earth ; I will cause them to walk by the rivers of water in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble ; for I am a father to Israel. He that scattered Israel shall gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock," Jer. xxxi. 9, 10.

11, 12. *And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted. Behold, these shall come from far : and, lo, these from the north and from the west ; and these from the land of Sinim.*

The prosperous state of the country is further expressed by representing it as covered with roads and highways, forming a striking contrast to its present untraversed condition. Or the object may be to express the facilities that will then exist, or that will be given, for the return of Israel. The following verse, as well as other passages, seem to point to this, see xl. 3 : " There shall be a highway for the remnant of his people that shall be left from Assyria," xiv. 16 ; " I will even make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert," xl. 19 ; " Prepare ye the way of the people, cast up the highway, gather out the stones," lxii. 10. This preparation will be followed by the gathering of Israel out from among the nations whither they have been scattered (12) : " The Lord shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah, from the four corners of the earth. There shall come from the north and from the west,"

literally, "from the sea," the Mediterranean, which lay west of Judea, see xliii. 6. The word Sinim does not occur elsewhere in Scripture, and its meaning is uncertain—Persia, Sin, or Pelusium, China, and other places, have each had their advocates.

13. *Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.*

The description concludes with a representation of universal nature sharing in the common joy which shall prevail when the favour of God shall have returned to Israel, when she shall take up the song, "O Lord, I will praise thee; though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me." The same invocation is frequently made, as in xliv. 23. In other cases, not the whole universe, but Judea alone, is called on to burst forth into a hymn of praise: "Break forth into singing, shout together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem," lii. 9.

14-16. *But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have (or, from having) compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.*

Zion, or the Jewish nation, is now introduced as complaining that the Lord, the God of Israel, had forgotten her. This complaint is to be understood of the long and still protracted season of her judgments. And how suitable to her condition is the language which is put into her lips, who for nearly 1800 years has been expelled from her own land, a people still without a country, every page of whose history since then details unexampled degradations and oppressions? Similar language is employed in other places: "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and



speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God?" xl. 27. Not less touching than the complaint of Israel is the denial which it receives on the part of God (15), to which is added the assurance (16-26), that she would be blessed more than ever; and that, as in the case of Job, the latter end would be made better with her than the beginning. The love of God to Israel, even when lying unhumiliated under his mighty hand, is declared to be greater than the most perfect specimen of human love, that of the mother to her babe. Hers is not always perfect—she may forget. In heathen lands, especially where infanticide has prevailed so shamefully, how has this law of nature been violated. But, unlike such unnatural forgetfulness, the Lord asserts that he would not forget Israel. On the contrary, he declares that Jerusalem is, and ever would be, before him, as is any object which is imprinted on the palm of the hand. What eastern custom is here alluded to is uncertain. Probably one which exists more or less in all countries, of delineating any figure on the skin by puncturing, and the rubbing in of gunpowder, or some equivalent. Very probably the city, or the temple, would be the subject generally selected by the Jews. Maundrell states (p. 75), that such a custom prevailed among those of the nation who visited Jerusalem. The point of the allusion is the indelibility of such representations; and such, unlike the love of a woman for her babe, is declared to be the remembrance of Jerusalem by the Lord. In language not less significant than the text, it is written, "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee," liv. 10.

17. *Thy children shall make haste; thy destroyers, and they that made thee waste, shall go forth of thee.*

The rapidity with which the restoration of Israel will be effected is here foretold. Although long deferred on account of her sin, yet when once set about it will be

speedily accomplished ; her children will make haste. This refers to the second, the complete, the final return of the nation. So it is often declared : “ Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows ? ” “ Who hath seen such things ? shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day ? shall a nation be born at once ? ” see xxvi. 20. These figures, the cloud driven before the wind—the doves hurrying to their homes—the infant introduced into the world with all its parts complete, express strikingly the rapidity of events when the Lord shall arise to recover Israel. Then also all Judea shall be cleared of its oppressors, they shall go forth. The same thing is taught in the end of verse 19. So also in Zeph. i. 18, “ He shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land.”

18-20. *Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold : all these gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee, as a bride doeth. For thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, and they that swallowed thee up shall be far away. The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait for me : give place to me, that I may dwell.*

The preceding promises being understood as fulfilled, and Israel restored to her own land, she is described as seeing multitudes of her people gathering to her. This agrees with the view taken throughout this exposition of the restoration of Israel to Judea, viz., as has been stated before, see xi. 11, 12, that the various predictions of Scripture which bear on the subject are irreconcilable except on the idea of a twofold restoration ; except on the ground, that subsequent to her national restoration—which does not necessarily include the whole body of the people, but only implies their repossession, as a nation, of the land—and after the infliction of judgments in Jerusalem, and her conversion to Christ, there will be the

restoration of those of the nation who have not embraced former opportunities of returning to Judea, and who, up to that period, will remain scattered over the earth. By the judgments that Israel will suffer after the first or national return, she will be so reduced as to be left as a beacon on the top of a hill, see xli. 7; and it is at this period in her history that she is called upon to lift up the eyes round about, and that it is said in regard to those of the nation who shall to that time remain abroad from her, but who then flock to her like doves—in regard to those of her children who shall make haste: “All these gather themselves together and come to thee.” They shall be to her then, when smitten and stripped by the judgments of heaven, the greatest acquisition, the most welcome gift, even what ornaments are to the bride. In reference to the same event, it is similarly written, “Lift up thine eyes round about and see, all they gather themselves together and come to thee; thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side,” lx. 4; see xxvi. 15. The numbers of those who shall thus be gathered is then described (19, 20). There will not be room enough in the land for the increase which will take place. The same thing is thus expressed in another passage: “More are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord. Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations,” liv. 1, 2. Of the numbers of Israel then, it is also said, that it shall be “as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude,” Hos. i. 11; “I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon, and place shall not be found for them,” Zech. x. 10. The meaning of the first clause of verse 20 is, according to this view, quite manifest: “the children which thou shalt have,” being the remnant left among the various nations of the earth after the first or national return; and the other, who are lost, being those of the

first returned who perish in those judgments in which two-thirds shall be cut off and die ; the addition of the former being so much greater numerically than the loss of the latter, that the land is too narrow for all.

21. *Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro ? and who hath brought up these ? Behold, I was left alone ; these, where had they been ?*

Those who survive the troubles that shall be brought upon Jerusalem when all nations shall be gathered together against it, amazed at such an accession to their numbers, are represented as asking, "Who hath begotten me these? who hath brought up (that is, nourished) these?" The expressions "desolate," "left alone," refer to the condition of the nation during her long continued adversity ; but especially to her condition at last when the Lord shall purge her with the spirit of burning. The expression "a captive, and removing to and fro," is also most descriptive of her condition in her protracted wanderings and exile. The figure is that of a widowed mother who has been deprived of her children, having others given her.

22, 23. *Thus saith the Lord God (or, Adonai Jehovah), Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people : and they shall bring thy sons in their arms (or, bosom), and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. And kings shall be thy nursing fathers (or, nourishers), and their queens (or, princesses) thy nursing mothers : they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet ; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord : for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.*

The aid of Gentile nations will be given, it is here declared, in effecting the restoration of the remnant of the Jews who shall not accompany their brethren at their first return. By a sign, the nature of which is not told, and cannot therefore be known, called here the lifting up, or beckoning with, the hand, and the setting up a standard, will the Gentiles be influenced to hasten their



return, see v. 26, and xiv. 2: "In that day there shall be a root of Jesse which shall stand for an ensign of the people;" "Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far. I will set a sign among them,—and they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord out of all nations." Honour will then be paid to the nation in proportion to its former shame (23). While in their past history they have been the laughing-stock of every Gentile beggar, the kings and queens of the earth shall yet honour them. And if the predictions of their humiliation are understood and have been fulfilled literally, why should not those also which foretell their glory? "The sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee;" "Thou shalt suck the breast of kings," lx. 10, 14, 16. So long as Israel has turned away from the Lord have wrath and reproach rested upon her; but then she will wait for the Lord, and will not be ashamed. It shall be said in that day, "This is the Lord, we have waited for him; we will be glad, and rejoice in his salvation."

24-26. *Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered (or, the captivity of the just)? But thus saith the Lord, Even the captives (or, captivity) of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children. And I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh; and they shall be drunken with their own blood, as with sweet (or, new) wine: and all flesh shall know that I the Lord am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob.*

The question, in the first of these verses, seems to be put into the mouth of Israel, representing them as asking how their deliverance could be brought about who were feeble captives in the hands of the mighty, and who suffered justly?—The word "lawful"<sup>1</sup> has presented a difficulty to critics.

<sup>1</sup> צַדִּיק, righteous, just. Lowth, without any authority, in order to carry out his favourite parallelism, substitutes תַּרְסִי, terrible.

Any departure from the literal signification seems unnecessary. Whose captivity has been more just or righteous than Israel's exile from their own land, viewing it as a divine judgment? The reply of the Lord to the doubting question is, that they would be delivered (25), for he would himself accomplish it. Similar language is often used in connexion with the final deliverance of Israel from their oppressors, when many nations shall be gathered against them: "I will help thee: all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed, they shall perish," xli. 10-12. The terribleness of their overthrow (26), when the winepress of the wrath of God shall be trodden, has been already repeatedly noticed, see ii. 4, 10; and the effect will be, that by the manifestation of Divine power, and of the Divine regard for Israel then displayed, all flesh shall know that her Saviour is the Lord.

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## CHAPTER L.

THIS chapter, after declaring the cause of Israel's troubles, and the power of God alone to give deliverance from them, delineates the character of the Deliverer whom he would provide in the person of Christ. The description has been applied by some to the prophet; but this is evidently unsatisfactory. It refers to the character of Christ as the Redeemer of the world, with particular reference to his circumstances as he was when on earth.

1. *Thus saith the Lord, Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.*

There is allusion here to two customs permitted by the law of Moses, and which prevailed among the Jews, the

one when a husband gave his wife a bill or writing of divorce, and put her away, Deut. xxiv. 1; the other when a parent, in order to meet his debts, sold his child for a servant, Exod. xxi. 7. The Lord is often represented as the husband and father of Israel; but he had not acted toward them as they did toward each other; their sorrows were not to be traced to his divorcement or sale of them; where would they find any such writing? On the contrary, their trials were their own doing: they were brought, by their own misconduct, on their own heads. Like the company of Dathan and Abiram, they have been sinners against their own souls. Their judgments are often ascribed to the same cause: "Thus saith the Lord, ye have sold yourselves for nought," lii. 3; "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God," lix. 2; "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself," Hos. xiii. 9. The passage seems to refer to their condition generally, with no reference to any particular period of their history.

2, 3. *Wherefore, when I came, was there no man? when I called, was there none to answer? Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver? Behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea; I make the rivers a wilderness: their flesh stinketh, because there is no water, and dieth for thirst. I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering.*

The universal depravity of the nation is expressed by the assertion, that when God came to them he found none (waiting for him); when he called, none answered. That this is the import of these expressions, that they refer to the sin of the nation, appears from parallel texts. Thus, "Therefore will I number you to the sword; because when I called ye did not answer, when I spake ye did not hear, but did evil before mine eyes," lxv. 12; lxvi. 4. This state of things did not arise, it is said, from the inability or unwillingness of the Lord to save them. His hand was not shortened. He reminds them of his drying

up with a word the sea of Egypt—of his turning countries watered and fertilized by rivers into desert, with reference probably to Judea and the neighbouring kingdoms—of his power to bring the dark clouds across the face of the skies (3). There is reference, it may be supposed, in these words, not only to what God has already done, but to what he will yet do in the day of his vengeance, when he shall “make the rivers islands, and dry up the pools,” xlii. 15 ; to the day when “the sun shall become black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon shall become as blood,” Rev. vi. 12.

4. *The Lord God (or, Adonai Jehovah) hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning; he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.*

The following verses (4-11) describe the fitness of Christ for the work he had undertaken, and the divine assistance which he would experience to carry it through, the whole applying to the Redeemer in his human character, when he became in all respects, sin excepted, what men are. His ability to instruct and comfort is first declared. This was manifested during his ministry on earth: “Grace was poured into his lips;” “Never man spake like this man;” “All wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth;” and what he was then personally, he is still through his promised Spirit and revealed word. The same character is applied to him in connexion with the final judgments and restoration of Israel; for, while to his enemies he will then be a consuming fire, to his people he will be the same gracious compassionate Saviour that he was in the days of his humiliation: “Cast ye up, prepare the way: for thus saith the high and lofty One—I dwell with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble—for I will not contend for ever,” lvii. 14-16. “The tongue of the learned” signifies the tongue of those who are qualified



to instruct. In the clause "he wakeneth morning by morning," there appears to be allusion to the careful teacher awaking his pupils early in order to receive instruction, implying the care of the Father in furnishing Christ for the office he had undertaken. The word translated "learned" means also learners; just as the English word scholar, Alexander remarks, is used both for a learner and a learned person. To awaken the ear is equivalent to opening it, to dispose or fit it for being taught.

5, 6. *The Lord God (or, Adonai Jehovah) hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.*

The Messiah is described as receiving approvingly—with open ear—the divine commission. With all the consequences to himself which it involved, and which he foresaw, he did not shrink from undertaking the mighty task—he was not rebellious. In one of the psalms the same assent on the part of Christ is thus expressed: "Lo I come; I delight to do thy will, O God," xlv. 7, 8. His work involved, as was foretold, and fulfilled when he was on earth, the extremities of suffering and of shame (6): scourging, plucking the beard, and spitting on the face, in all countries, and especially in the East, form the keenest insults and the deepest degradations. It is most ignominious for the slave to receive such treatment at the hands of a superior; but what measure is there of the ignominy to which the Creator was subjected, when he received that treatment at the hands of the worm and rebel, man?

7-9. *For the Lord God (or, Adonai Jehovah) will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand together: who is mine adversary (or, the master of my cause)? let him come near to me. Behold the Lord God (or, Adonai Jehovah) will help me; who is he that shall*

*condemn me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up.*

Why, as the second Adam, the man Christ Jesus, he ventured on such an undertaking as the humbling of Satan by his own humiliation—as the bruising his head, by his being himself wounded in the “heel of his humanity,” was his assurance of divine help. His need of this help was ever acknowledged by him when on earth, as in the prayers which he presented for it. His prayer with his disciples, for example, before he parted with them when he entered Gethsemane, when he lifted up his eyes to heaven, seeking at the heavenly throne that help which he could not get elsewhere, and said, *The hour is come—the hour of his trial—of his extremity—of his agony—* shows how great was his need of help, and how strong his conviction that the Lord would help him. The prayer, “Glorify thy Son,” was answered. The language which he uttered, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,” and such like, and his whole bearing after this prayer was offered up, showed that it was heard; and by that bearing again, the Son also, in his turn, glorified the Father. The expression, “I have set my face like a flint,” implies resolution—firmness. There is allusion to this characteristic of the Redeemer in his history, as where it is said, “He steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.” Not only did the Father strengthen him for his work, he also justified him (8), or vindicated his claim to being the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. He did so particularly by the miraculous accompaniments of his birth, and baptism, and death. Often were his claims as the Redeemer from heaven challenged and ridiculed, but in vain; he established them against all who contended<sup>1</sup> with him; so that in repeated instances his enemies, foiled in reason and in argument, had recourse

<sup>1</sup> Contend, from *רִיב* to contend, particularly as in a court of justice, as in i. 17, plead for the widow.

to slander or violence. No one could rightfully condemn him (9) ;—his judge washed his hands of his blood ;—his enemies invoked it on their own heads when they could not lay it at the feet of justice ;—he was condemned, not, however, by truth, but by the lies of false accusers. But, while he would outlive his humiliation, his enemies would perish like old garments, or a dress consumed by moths. This was accomplished in the destruction of Jerusalem. While these latter predictions were realized during Christ's ministry on earth, it is not necessary to confine them to that period, as they are universal truths. The opposition of men to Christ has never ceased. He carries on and will finish his work of regenerating this world with the same face of flint with which he began it. His vindication of himself has ever been complete ; and the fate of all his opposers will be that of Jerusalem of old. The comparison of a garment destroyed by moths is applied to the overthrow of his enemies in the day of the last national judgments, li. 7, 8. The whole of these verses indeed (7-9) correspond with the transactions of those days, and may be so regarded, the vision passing from the first to the second coming of the Lord.

10, 11. *Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light ? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God. Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks : walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand ; ye shall lie down in sorrow.*

The concluding verses form two lessons drawn from what had just been said of the Redeemer, of his trials, and of his support under them, if the previous verses be limited to his first coming, and addressed to the two different classes into which men are divided. That they are addressed to the Jews is evident from the first verses of the following chapter, but to what particular period of their history is not clear. As it happened to the Saviour,

so it will happen to his disciples, who are known by their fear of the Lord, and their obedience to the voice of his Son. There will be times when it may be said of them that they "walk in darkness, and have no light." The rule then is, after the example of him who said, "The Lord will help me, therefore shall I not be confounded," to trust in the Lord; and if the blind man who walks in darkness trusts in the brute that guides him, and goes on his sightless way without a fear and without a doubt, how much more may the believer fear not with such a stay on which to lean. In contrast to this class, there is another (11), whose description is applicable to formalists and hypocrites of every name. Instead of seeking the light of the Son of righteousness, they kindle a fire and strike sparks of their own—they substitute self-righteousness, in some or other of its varied phases, for Christ's righteousness—they follow the *ignis fatuus* of the marsh of sin, which leads to destruction, instead of the true light, which lighteth every man. These, in a style of address which is as startling as it is unusual, are told to proceed as they have begun—they are bid go on—"walk in the light of your fire." But the merciful God does not part with them in this way—he warns them; he withdraws the curtain, and gives them a glimpse of the end of the course which they are walking on. Whatever may be their day—how bright soever—its end cometh;—their night is at hand—a night, too, which will know no ending—they must lie down, and it will be in sorrow. If, however, verses 7-9 be understood as referring to the work of Christ when he shall gird his sword on his thigh, and sinners shall be consumed out of the earth in the day of his vengeance, these last verses are to be regarded as inviting his own people, in those days of great tribulation, to put their confidence in him until the indignation be overpast, and as predicting the final overthrow of his enemies.



## CHAPTER LI.

THIS chapter, whose disjunction from the preceding is manifestly improper, is occupied generally with promises of Israel's final restoration and prosperity, interspersed with assurances of the destruction of her enemies, and invitations to put confidence in the God of Israel, on the ground of what he was, and of what he had done for her in past ages.

1, 2. *Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.*

Those of the Jews who sought the Lord—the same who are described in the 10th verse of the previous chapter, and who are there directed in the day when they should walk in darkness to trust in the Lord—are now directed, also for their encouragement, to remember their origin from Abraham and Sarah (2): how God had raised them from so small and unlikely a beginning—so unlikely that the idea of having a child in their advanced years appeared ludicrous in the sight of Sarah. The language may be regarded as addressed to the Jews in all their past or yet coming judgments, but with particular reference, it would seem from what follows, to what is yet to come. The significance of the allusion to the rock and pit is obvious. It teaches that there was the same contrast between what God had made them and what they were in their origin, as there is between the unhewn rock of the quarry and

the stones when dressed and reared into a goodly building; and the inference intended to be drawn is, that he who had done so much for the nation in time past would recover it from any degradation whatever into which it might have sunk.

*3. For the Lord shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.*

That God would give that deliverance to Israel from trouble which might be inferred from his past dealings with them, is here taught, not by inference, but expressly. The restoration of the city, the highest degree of fertility to the land, and gladness to the nation, are promised. The common application of the passage to the return from the Babylonish captivity is certainly untenable. There is no evidence that the city and country fell into that degree of desolation which is here indicated, any more than that they reached the high point of prosperity foretold—the nation never recovering its lost position. The verse harmonizes with the state of things that will prevail in that land after the restoration and conversion of Israel: Then the song will be taken up, “O Lord, I will praise thee—thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me;” “Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem; for the Lord hath comforted his people.” The allusions, in the end of the verse, to the songs of thanksgiving and praise which will then be taken up, are very frequent, and have been repeatedly noticed, xii. 1.

*4-6. Hearken unto me, my people; and give ear unto me, O my nation: for a law shall proceed from me, and I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the people. My righteousness is near; my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the people; the isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath; for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a gar-*

*ment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner : but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished.*

Another encouragement given to the right-hearted of the nation, and to which the whole nation is called on to attend, is the conversion of the Gentiles to the service of the Messiah. The word "judgment" here seems equivalent to "law" in the previous clause, the second clause expressing the perpetuity of the blessing named in the first. Not only would the word, or law, of God go forth as a light to the people or Gentiles, but it would rest, or continue to be so. In parallel passages it is said to be from Jerusalem, as from a centre, where the Lord will in some way manifest his glory, that his law or word shall proceed : "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." The righteousness of the Lord (5) here, as in similar places, appears to denote the manifestation of his righteousness or justice which will then be made, both in the fulfilment of his promises to Israel and in the just punishment of the nations of the earth. Although relatively so far off at the time Isaiah prophesied, yet these events were near absolutely ; and they were near prophetically, coming within the range of the prophetic eye as much as the nearest events. For the encouragement of Israel, they are represented as near, as in other places : "I bring near my righteousness—my salvation shall not tarry : I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory," xlv. 13 ; "My salvation is near to come, and my judgment to be revealed," lvi. 1. The extension of his kingdom is connected, as in other places, with the judgments of his enemies. The clause, "Mine arms shall judge the people," refers to the last trial that shall come upon the earth, when the Lord shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people. The isles, or maritime countries, are often specified as among those who shall then seek the Lord : "He shall not fail till he have set judgment in the earth ; and the isles shall

wait for his law," see xlii. 4. The Jews are then assured (6) of the permanent character of that salvation with which this world will at last be blessed. To magnify this feature of the reign of Christ in righteousness on earth, Israel is invited to contrast it with the perishing character of all created things. Eternal as the heavens and the earth appear, his kingdom will be more lasting. This world grows old; all that moves in it is subject to death; but the salvation brought by God to Jew and Gentile will be for ever. The same contrast between the mutability of everything created, with reference particularly to those physical phenomena which are to attend the coming of Christ, and the immutability of the Creator and his promises, is often made. Thus, in allusion to the convulsions of nature then, and the truth of God's promises to Israel, it is said, "The heavens and the earth shall perish, but thou shalt endure," Ps. cii. 25; "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away," Matt. xxiv. 35; "The heavens and the earth shall shake, but the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel," Joel iii. 16.

7, 8. *Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings: for the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.*

From the previous declaration is deduced an encouragement to those who are here addressed—those of the Jewish nation with whom religion is not a matter of form, but heartfelt, to hearken to God, and to disregard the reproach of men, viz., that while those who reviled them would utterly perish (8), his salvation of them would be for ever. While this encouragement is a general one, applicable to the condition of the Jews at all times, it seems from the context to refer particularly to what shall immediately precede their final deliverance—to what is called the time



of Jacob's trouble, when all faces shall be turned into paleness, but out of which they shall be saved, Jer. xxx. 6, 7. It is their enemies then who "shall be ashamed and also confounded, all of them: but Israel shall be saved with an everlasting salvation, xlv. 16, 17.

9, 10. *Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it that hath cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon? Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?*

The form of the prophecy now alters. Instead of God addressing those of Israel who truly feared him, they are represented as pleading with him for their deliverance. The arm of the Lord is represented as slumbering, descriptive of his long delay in avenging the wrongs of Israel. This language agrees with that of a class of passages already referred to; see xviii. 4. God will bear long with his own elect, who cry day and night unto him. Israel is represented as calling upon the slumbering arm of God to awake, appealing to bygone and signal proofs of its prowess, viz., the overthrow of Rahab or Egypt, and of Pharaoh, and the drying up of the waters of the Red Sea; and inviting him to repeat the wonderful deliverances he had wrought in days of old (10). It is pretty evident that the term dragon, or serpent, represents Pharaoh or the power of Egypt. The crocodile, with which the Nile abounded, and which may be included under the term dragon, is a fit symbol of that land. The whole description refers to the single event of the deliverance from Egypt. A striking parallel of the passage occurs in the 74th psalm. In it Israel addresses God, entreating safety from her enemies. There is the same reference as in Isaiah to the reproach and revilings of men—"How long shall the adversary reproach?" the same slumbering of the divine arm—it is "withdrawn," it is "in the bosom;" the same call to awake—"pluck it

out of thy bosom ;” the same appeal to the past, to ancient days—“ God is King of old ;” and to the deliverance from Pharaoh and his host—“ Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength, thou breakest the head of leviathan in pieces.”

11. *Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion ; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head : they shall obtain gladness and joy ; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.*

In answer to the touching appeal of Israel, who, like the patriarch from whom they sprung, are represented as having power with God and prevailing, it is foretold that the nation would be restored to their own land. The description agrees with nothing in their past history, and must refer to their universal and peaceful and permanent possession of Judea. Their return from Babylon was neither full, nor peaceful, nor final. It was that of only a section of the nation ; it was accompanied with so frequent alarms, that while they were rebuilding their city, they had to do so with the sword in their hands, and they were again and again driven from it, until, by the Romans, they were scattered over the earth.

12-14. *I, even I, am he that comforteth you : who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass ; and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth ; and hast feared continually every day, because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were (or, made himself) ready to destroy ? and where is the fury of the oppressor ? The captive exile hasteneth that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit, nor that his bread should fail.*

The previous form of address is now resumed, and God appears repeating his assurance of deliverance to Israel (12-16). The argument is the same as before. With him on their side who is pre-eminently the God of Israel, why should they fear ? Their enemies, who were previously described as destined to perish like a moth-eaten garment,

are again declared to be mortal—to be not only doomed to death, but to perish quickly like grass before the scythe, which in the morning groweth up, and in the evening is cut down and withered. There is reference here, it may be supposed, to the circumstances of the final overthrow of their enemies, when the governors of Judah shall be to them like a torch of fire in a sheaf. While such was the fate of their enemies, their comforter was the Creator of all things. And yet, with a friend so omnipotent and a foe so powerless, they are charged with yielding to constant and unworthy fears (13). The period to which allusion is made in these verses seems to be to the time when the Lord shall gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle, previous to the time of national judgment, when it shall be said to Israel, “Fear not, thou worm Jacob; I will help thee, saith the Lord,” see xli. 14. That such is the bearing of this verse is corroborated by parallel texts. Thus, in a passage which refers clearly to the final restoration of Israel—for it is the time when all flesh shall see the glory of the Lord—there is the same allusion to the comfort which she will then receive, to the overthrow of the nations gathered together against her, and to the immutability of the word of the Lord: “Comfort ye my people....cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished....all flesh is grass....the word of the Lord shall stand for ever,” xl. 1-8. The expression, “Where is the fury of the oppressor?” in reference to the enemies gathered against Jerusalem, implies, What will it come to? What will be its result? That is taught elsewhere. It will be met with the fury of the Almighty, and its fate in the collision cannot be doubtful: “I will repay fury to his adversaries, recompence to his enemies.” Of these last oppressors—the nations who in the latter years shall come against the mountains of Israel—it is said, “I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws,” Ezek. xxxviii. 4. They will be treated and tamed like the excited ox, and

where then will be the fury of the oppressor? The futility of their fury is indicated by the following verse (14), which describes the final deliverance of Israel from all their oppressors. They are represented as being seen hastening to have their fetters struck off,<sup>1</sup> and leaving the pit of their punishment. The same figures of chains, and a pit or cavern—the latter also being one of the means of punishment in the East, to which there are repeated Scripture allusions, thus, “deliver him from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom”—often occur in the description of Israel’s judgments: “Loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion,” lii. 2; “I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water. Turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope,” Zech. ix. 11, 12.

15, 16. *But I am the Lord thy God, that divided the sea, whose waves roared: The Lord of hosts is his name. And I have put my words in thy mouth, and have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people.*

As a pledge that this deliverance would be effected for Israel, there is added, as on many similar occasions, a declaration of the power of the God of Israel, of what he had done for them in the waters of the Red Sea, of the privileges they had enjoyed, and of the general protection vouchsafed to them. The expression “I have put my words in thy mouth,” refers to the knowledge of himself given by the Lord to Israel peculiarly, and, only through Israel, to other nations, including the national promises made to them. In allusion to their privileges in this respect, it is written, “My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth,” lix. 21. Another pledge of the preference

<sup>1</sup> “The captive exile.” The idea of exile does not exist in the original. The word is from עָקַף, to bend, incline, as a vessel when being emptied, then to be bent down by fetters.



and favour of God is the protection extended to her. While her oppressors, Babylon, Rome, &c., have been blotted out from among the nations of the earth, and others exist only in name, she is still miraculously preserved, covered in the shadow of the Almighty's hand. And the object of all this—of her early deliverances—of her peculiar privileges—of her lengthened preservation—is, that by her, as his instrument, when his glory shall finally be seen upon her—when he shall say to Zion, Thou art my people—he may establish the new heavens and the new earth. It is through her that the conversion of the world is to be brought about—the Gentiles will come to her light—and for so high an object is she preserved. The conversion of Israel and the appearing of the new earth are similarly connected in other places: “Behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered .... But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy,” lxv. 17, 18.

17-20. *Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of his fury: thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, and wrung them out. There is none to guide her among all the sons whom she hath brought forth; neither is there any that taketh her by the hand of all the sons that she hath brought up. These two things are come (or, happened) unto thee; who shall be sorry for thee? desolation, and destruction (or, breaking), and the famine, and the sword: by whom shall I comfort thee? Thy sons have fainted, they lie at the head of all the streets, as a wild bull in a net: they are full of the fury of the Lord, the rebuke of thy God.*

God having declared what he would do for Israel, how he would say unto her, Thou art my people, is represented as putting his purpose in execution, calling to Jerusalem to awake. This gives rise to a description of the state to which she had been reduced, which occupies the remainder of the chapter, concluding with an assurance of a termination to her woes. The whole is very animated. The deliverance referred to is unquestionably their final recovery,

when the cup of the Lord's fury, which the nation is still drinking, shall have been exhausted. The first part of the description is taken from the condition of a person who is asleep and fallen, overcome by intoxication. In a following verse (11), Israel is said to be "afflicted and drunken, but not with wine." Similar to the condition of the drunkard when overpowered by intoxication—an object of kindred guilt, and degradation, and shame, and pity, is Jerusalem represented to be. The same exciting language as is used here—"Awake, awake," is addressed to her in the beginning of the following chapter. It implies the suddenness as well as the magnitude of the change which she will then experience. The judgments of the nation are represented as lighting upon all its members (18)—mother and children are involved in the same curse—there is none to guide her. Where, for many ages, has Israel had a son to counsel her and extricate her from her oppressions? Who would attempt the task now of taking her by the hand? How long already has she presented the phenomenon of a nation with none of her own race among the most subordinate of her rulers? Her judgments are declared to be twofold (19). A difficulty has been experienced in reconciling the "two things" of the first clause with what appear four forms of calamity. It is generally explained by understanding the two last of these as the causes of the others; famine and the sword producing desolation and destruction. Or the passage may be regarded as prophetic of the evils uttered both against the land and the people. The term desolation is properly descriptive of the state of the land, perhaps also the word famine; the others express the destruction of the people by the sword, by violence. So far are her sons from being able to aid their mother Jerusalem, that they are described (20) as being reduced to the same extremity as herself, stunned by the severity of their stroke, drunk with the cup of divine fury, and powerless

as the wild beast<sup>1</sup> when entangled in a net. The description is applicable, generally, to what has been the condition of Israel for many ages, but it embraces the whole period of her judgments up to the time of her deliverance, and may relate particularly to what her condition will be when the last of them shall come, when the dregs of her cup, the last, but most bitter part of it, shall be drunk. Of that period it is said, that "even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fail," xl. 30.

21-23. *Therefore hear now this, thou afflicted, and drunken, but not with wine : Thus saith thy Lord the Lord, and thy God that pleadeth the cause of his people, Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my fury ; thou shalt no more drink it again : but I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee ; which have said to thy soul, Bow down, that we may go over : and thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street, to them that went over.*

Israel, when in the condition described before—when overpowered, not by wine, but by the cup of the Lord's fury—is assured that that cup is taken from her never to drink of it any more (22), and put into the hands of those who afflicted her. This teaches that the punishment of the nations of the earth for their sins will follow that of Israel for her sins—a doctrine which is implied in that large class of passages which represent Israel as one of the instruments of inflicting that punishment, as when it is said that she will be made to them a cup of trembling, a torch. And similarly it is written : "I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children, and I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh," xlix. 25, 26 ; "In those days, I will bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem ; I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my heritage

<sup>1</sup> "Wild bull." It is not known what animal is intended here. It has been translated gazelle, wild goat, &c.

Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land," Joel iii. 1, 2. In the concluding verse there seems to be reference to the extremity of degradation to which captives were subjected by their conquerors in ancient times, different cases being on record in which what is here recorded of the conqueror trampling upon, or going over his captives, literally took place.

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## CHAPTER LII.

THIS chapter is also closely connected with what precedes, the first twelve verses being a continuation of the previous subject. After predicting that Israel would be lifted up from the condition into which she would be sunk by the pressure of divine judgments, and how these would be transferred from her to her oppressors, the subject of her recovery is here resumed and enlarged upon; the next subject, which is only commenced in this chapter, being the success and character of Christ her Saviour. The common application of the passage to the deliverance from Babylon is not only generally forced, and always unsatisfactory, but often impracticable. How, for example, without going farther than the first verse, could it be said of that period, "henceforth there shall no more come unto thee the uncircumcised and the unclean," when subsequently the sin of the nation proceeded from bad to worse, until their cry reached to heaven, so that God rooted up the city by the hands of Titus and others, and scattered its people to the four winds of heaven? Or how, with that application of the passage, does it agree with other prophecies, that the abomination of desolation—the Ro-



man army—should stand in the holy place, and that the city would be trodden down by uncircumcised Gentiles?

1, 2. *Awake, awake ; put on thy strength, O Zion ; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city : for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean. Shake thyself from the dust ; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem : loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion.*

Israel, addressed in the same animated strain as in the preceding chapter, is urged to awake from the slumber in which she has so long been lying—to exchange her feebleness for strength—her nakedness for the beautiful garments, never more to be defiled, which distinguished her in the long-past day of her prosperity and holiness. Probably there is a contrast between this description and what precedes. Instead of remaining drunken, stupified, helpless, defiled, like the drunkard in the mire, she is called on to awake, to put on her strength and beauty. Instead of being fallen, with the body stretched on the ground, she is to arise and shake off the dust. The description can apply only to the time yet to come, when God, having turned his hand upon her, shall purge away her dross, and she shall be called “The city of righteousness, The holy city,” i. 25, 26 ;—to the time when the days of Israel’s mourning shall be ended, when the people shall be all righteous, and shall inherit the land for ever, lx. 20, 21. Israel, next represented as sitting in the dust and in chains (2), is called on to arise, to shake off the dust from her garments, and her chains from her neck. These figures are repeatedly used in other places to express the degraded state of the land and people: “She being desolate shall sit upon the ground,” iii. 26 ; “She has laid her body as the ground,” li. 23 ; “The captive exile hasteneth, that he may be loosed,” li. 14.

3, 4. *For thus saith the Lord, Ye have sold yourselves for nought ; and ye shall be redeemed without money. For thus saith the Lord God (or, Adonai Jehovah), My people went down aforetime into Egypt to sojourn there ; and the Assyrian oppressed them without cause.*

A feature of the recovery of the nation in that day from all the countries whither they have been scattered, is said to be, that as they were made captives without money, so unlike the yielding up of other captives, they shall be surrendered without a price for their ransom. It will be enough that the God of Israel say, "Give up, keep not back." On the contrary, so far will they be from paying a price for their ransom, that a large class of passages teaches that the wealth of the Gentiles among whom they are scattered will be placed at their service, see xiv. 2. There appears, at first sight, a contradiction between this prediction and one which has already been noticed: "I gave Egypt for thy ransom." The explanation is, that the two statements refer to different periods, the second to the return of Israel nationally and unconverted; the other to the bringing in of the remnant, when the riches of the Gentiles shall be given them. In assurance of this—their redemption without a ransom—they are reminded how the Almighty had of old rescued them from the bondage of Egypt without ransom (4), and how they had been delivered from the frequent oppressions of the Assyrians; and what he had done for the nation in time past he could do again.

5, 6. *Now therefore, what have I here, saith the Lord, that my people is taken away for nought? They that rule over them make them to howl, saith the Lord; and my name continually every day is blasphemed. Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore they shall know in that day, that I am he that doth speak; behold, it is I.*

In the first of these verses the Lord is represented as struck with astonishment or indignation at the condition to which he sees his people Israel reduced—removed unjustly from their own land—treated cruelly by their oppressors—and in the dishonour of Israel the God of Israel dishonoured. This view of their condition appears, from what follows, to be a general one, embracing their state up to the period of their deliverance. The expression

“what have I here,” is literally, “what to me here.” Its import is not very evident. Lowth translates “what have I more to do?” Or it may express, what state of matters is this? referring generally to the degradation of the Jewish people. For the state of things described here, the people of God oppressed, and the name of God despised, a remedy must be found, and one is promised (6). They would be made to know the Lord by the deliverance which they would experience when restored finally to their own land. In the doings of that day they will see what will vindicate the honour of the Almighty, and put an end to all blasphemy of his name. The knowledge of the Lord by Israel is often represented as an effect of these events. Thus, after a minute account of the blessings which they shall experience when restored to Judea, it is added, “and thou shalt know that I the Lord am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob,” lx. 16; again, “I will cause you to come up out of graves, and bring you into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the Lord,” Ezek. xxxvii. 12, 13.

7, 8. *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion.*

No sooner is the promise made than it is represented as being fulfilled. A messenger is seen appearing on the mountains round about Jerusalem, bearing a message which is called good tidings, peace, salvation—proclaiming to the city that the Lord reigneth. The context shows that this must relate to the final establishment of Christ’s kingdom among men, which is to begin at Jerusalem; to the time when “the Redeemer shall come to Zion,” and the Lord “shall reign in Zion, and before his ancients gloriously.” It is not necessary to understand

here a literal individual messenger. It may be but a figurative intimation of the fact of good tidings being brought, just as in some places the watchman appears to be an imaginary character, see xxi. 6. With some alterations, the passage is applied by Nahum (i. 15) to the same period, for it is marked as the time when the wicked shall no more pass through her. It is also applied, by adaptation, by Paul, to ministers of the gospel, Rom. x. 15. A very similar passage, and referring also to the reign of Christ over Israel at last, is that in xl. 9 (margin). The appearance of the messenger on the mountains around Jerusalem is followed by the rejoicing of the watchmen on the walls of the city at the good tidings (8). There are repeated other allusions to those who are called the watchmen of Israel. One of the clearest of them is the following: "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the Lord keep not silence." Here the watchmen are explained to be those who make mention of the Lord, those who seek Israel's recovery—all who come under the character of praying for the peace of Jerusalem. These, so soon as her restoration is effected, are described as exchanging their supplications for thanksgivings.—The expression "they shall see eye to eye," is equivalent to a more common Scriptural phrase, "they shall see face to face," and denotes, to see distinctly. Under the government of the Messiah, when he shall restore Zion—that knowledge being recovered which man has lost, and which revelation has in part restored—the righteous shall know, not as now in part, which even the learned and gifted Paul acknowledged was his case, but even as they are known; then they shall see no longer through a glass.

9, 10. *Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.*



The rejoicing of the people at Jerusalem is represented as extending to her waste places. This may imply the universal prevalence of joy when the favour of God shall return to that nation, as in other places the whole of nature—the heavens and the earth—is called on to join in the song of praise, xliv. 23 ; xlix. 13. Or it may express the return of fertility to the land, as when it is said, “The Lord will comfort Zion ; he will comfort all her waste places, and make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord,” li. 3. The former view is preferable here, owing to what follows. The song which the waste places are to sing is represented in the remainder of the 9th and in the 10th verses. The subjects of it are the deliverance of Israel from all her evils, the destruction of her enemies, and the manifestation to all the world of her salvation. The judgments of God upon the nations are expressed by the clause “the Lord hath made bare his holy arm.” The phrase, to make bare the arm, is explained in the same way as the similar one, to gird up the loins ; it refers to the loose sleeve of the East, which required to be tucked up before engaging in work. Similar language is frequently employed in describing the overthrow by divine power of the nations gathered against Jerusalem : “Awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord ;” “His right hand and his holy arm have gotten him the victory.” The same effect is also ascribed to these national judgments in other places. They will be of a kind to arrest the attention of all flesh : “The Lord hath made known his salvation : his righteousness hath he openly showed in the sight of the heathen. He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel : all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God,” Ps. xcviii. 1-3. The word salvation is equally ambiguous in English and Hebrew. It may allude to the deliverance of Israel either from their temporal or spiritual evils.

11, 12. *Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing ; go ye out of the midst of her ; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord. For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight : for the Lord will go before you ; and the God of Israel will be your rereward (or, gather you up).*

The separation of the Jews from all the nations of the earth is here declared. The language of John, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues," appears to refer to the same circumstance. That language employed in describing the separation of the people of God from the mystic Babylon previous to its destruction, connects it with the nations gathered against Jerusalem. Of that Babylon it is also said, that it shall "gather the kings of the earth and of the whole world to the battle of the great day of God Almighty," Rev. xvi. 14. The manner of the separation of Israel is also foretold.<sup>1</sup> Unlike her removal from Egypt, when she fled from her pursuers, she will not go with haste (12). On the contrary, so far from opposing, the nations of the earth shall aid her departure, see xiv. 2. It is then that "the isles and ships of Tarshish shall wait to bring the sons of Israel from far, their silver and their gold with them," lx. 9. Did these two verses stand detached, or in clear connexion with the return of Israel from Babylon, to which they are usually applied, they might be understood naturally enough of that event. Nothing is more likely than that the different deliverances of the nation should have more or fewer features in common. But if the facts of one deliverance do not correspond *in every particular* with the prophecy, its fulfilment must be sought in the circumstances of another. In many particulars the incidents of the deliverance from Babylon do not tally with this prophecy of Isaiah, and,

<sup>1</sup> Your rereward, from רָעַר, to gather, assemble. Hence to bring up the rear, that is, to collect the last stragglers of an army. Its use here implies very significantly how universal the gathering of the dispersed of Judah at last will be.

therefore, the whole must be referred to that which is yet to come.

13-15. *Behold, my servant shall deal prudently (or, prosper), he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at thee ; (his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men ;) so shall he sprinkle many nations ; the kings shall shut their mouths at him : for that which had not been told them shall they see, and that which they had not heard shall they consider.*

These verses, although closely connected with what precedes, are still more so with the following chapter, from which they are improperly disjoined. They describe the glory of Christ, which will be manifested when he shall gather Israel, a glory which shall be in proportion to his former shame. At the time when all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of Jerusalem, when the Lord, as their guide and rereward, shall restore them to their own land, Christ the servant of the Almighty, the agent by whom this is done, shall prosper, (margin), shall be highly exalted. So it is often said similarly. It is on the shoulders of the Son that the government of the kingdom of righteousness shall be, and it is in connexion with it that he is called the mighty God. It is by him that the restoration of Israel and the concomitant destruction of their enemies will be effected, and with these events Scripture constantly associates the glory, the exaltation of the Deliverer and avenger. It is in connexion with the warfare of Jerusalem being accomplished, and her iniquity pardoned, that it is said, "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together," xli. 2, 5. Of that time it is written, "Sing unto the Lord, for he hath done excellent things ;" "The Lord is exalted, for he dwelleth on high." Of the exaltation of Christ, then, it is added—there being here a change of person from the second to the third, as is so common in Isaiah—that in proportion to the depth of his humiliation (14) will be the greatness of his glory (15) : "As many were astonished at

thee, so shall he sprinkle many nations." And how exalted an idea does this convey of the greatness of his glory? From the cradle to the grave—from Bethlehem to Calvary—was his life one succession of humiliations. Treated by men with inhuman cruelty; his pure soul assailed and tortured by the solicitations of Satan; and forsaken by God; the eternal love of the Father converted into wrath, he could not sink lower in sinless humiliation. But as inconceivable and infinite as was the shame of the man of sorrows—that bruised reed—will be his glory when that world which hath been "darkened by the shadow of his cross shall be lighted up with the glory of his throne." In regard to his humiliation it is said, that the effects of his sufferings were so traceable in his appearance<sup>1</sup> as to excite the astonishment of the spectator. Judging from the effects of suffering in others, in the shrunken features and shattered frame of the sufferer, no doubt, although it is not expressed in his history, that of Christ told visibly upon the frame of him who was flesh of our flesh. And as his sufferings were greater than others can endure, so, doubtless, his visage and form were more marred than those of others. No doubt, when Pilate brought him forth, after having scourged him, and presented him to the Jewish mob, disfigured with blood and racked with pain, and said, "Behold your King," in the vain hope that the pitiful spectacle would move their compassion; no doubt, at such a time, the prophecy of Isaiah would be fulfilled in his appearance; and still more, when not only was the back torn by the lash, but his brow also was lacerated by the thorns, and his cheek by the rod, and his hands and his feet by the nails, and his side by the spear, would he present the aspect of one marred more than the sons of men. But proportionally

<sup>1</sup> Visage, from כִּרְאָה, signifying a looking, then the object seen, then appearance, as in Ex. xxiv. 17. This is the meaning here, not the face only, but the general appearance.



great is it foretold that his glory will be (15) in the conversion of many nations to him—in the reverence of kings. The expression “shall sprinkle many nations,” appears to refer to the purifying influences of his Spirit, who will then be poured upon all flesh. Speaking of the bestowal of his grace on the Jews, it is similarly written, “I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean,” Ezek. xxxvi. 25. The expression “kings shall shut their mouths,” denotes silence and subjection. Instead of taking counsel together any more against him, “all kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall serve him,” Ps. lxxii. 11.

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## CHAPTER LIII.

THE preceding prediction, that the glory of the Messiah will be proportionate to his past abasement, is followed in this chapter by a lengthened prophetic description of the latter, closing with a declaration to the same effect as that in the close of the previous chapter, that *because* he has been subjected to such humiliation, *therefore* shall he be exalted. The passage is not the first one in which the humiliation of the Redeemer is foretold by the prophet. It has been always regarded as among the most interesting and important portions of Scripture, and of none has the sentential structure been more closely scrutinized, or the exegesis been more minute and careful.

1. *Who hath believed our report (or, doctrine, or, hearing) ? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed ?*

The chapter opens with a complaint by the prophet of the unbelief with which men generally would receive what he spoke concerning the Messiah. The arm of the Lord is the familiar emblem of his power, and here refers

to his power in revealing to the understandings of men the beauty of the Saviour. (How well founded the prophetic complaint is, was proved by the reception which the Redeemer met with on earth when he came to his own and his own received him not: and his reception by the Jews is an illustration of what it has been since, and will be until the time come, when no longer revealed only to a few, "he shall make bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see his salvation." Who believe the report now; who receive the word gladly; to how many is it still foolishness; to how few the power of God unto salvation?

2, 3. *For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him (or, he hid as it were his face from us, or, as an hiding of faces from him, or, from us); he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

What is described negatively in the first verse is described positively in these. Here the prophet identifying himself, as in other instances, with the Jewish people, describes their rejection of him. The more literal translation of the second verse is: "For I grew up before him (the Lord) as a shoot and as a root out of a dry ground, he had no form nor comeliness that we should see him (look upon him), no beauty that we should desire him." The figure of a solitary shoot from a decayed trunk or a root, springing up in the desert without moisture or shade, is a very significant emblem of the unattractive aspect of the Saviour to the Jews. What a contrast between the reality and the expectation of those who thought only of the glory that was to follow, but overlooked the sufferings that had to go before it! There may be allusion here as there is in other places (xi. 1), to the condition of the once royal house of David at Christ's birth, then no longer the lofty tree but a decayed trunk, an unnoticed root.

It is not necessary to suppose that there is any reference to the personal appearance of the Saviour, a subject on which, in his history, Scripture does not throw out a single hint. The object of the passage is to indicate the opinion of the Jews of his claim to the Messiahship, and what that was they did not conceal: "Is not this Joseph's son, whose father and mother we know?" The fulfilment of the prophecy is too obvious to require illustration. The crucified Nazarene of the evangelists is, without doubt, the man of sorrows of the prophet. In the clause "we hid as it were our faces from him," the allusion, according to this translation, is to the covering the face from any offensive object. The literal translation is the first of the two given in the margin. Lowth translates, "as one that hideth his face from us," referring to the custom of mourners hiding the lower part of their faces, 2 Sam. xv. 20, and of lepers covering their upper lip, Lev. xiii. 45.

4-6. *Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded (or, tormented) for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes (or, bruise) we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all (or, hath made the iniquities of us all to meet on him.)*

The objects of Christ's sufferings are here stated. They were penal,—he was wounded for transgressions; they were vicarious,—he was wounded for our transgressions; they were propitiatory—they were for our peace, the transgression of our peace was upon him. The doctrine of the vicarious sufferings of the Saviour especially, is here taught as plainly as language could do it;<sup>1</sup> nay, as if

<sup>1</sup> He hath borne, from נָשָׂא, to lift up, to carry; applied to the bearing of sin; to being liable to its punishment, Lev. v. 1-17; and to the bearing it by one for another, Lev. x. 17; Num. xiv. 33. It is this verse which is alluded to in Matt. viii. 17, in reference to bodily diseases. They are included. The Redeemer bore away both, but this is not the chief idea.

to meet the unbelief and pride of the human heart, which naturally revolts from this truth, it is reiterated in these verses again and again, as if to compel if possible its reception. While the Saviour paid to the law of God the penalty which man should have paid, the Jewish nation is represented as attributing his griefs to the displeasure of God, esteeming him smitten of God, according to the false but popular belief, repeatedly referred to in Scripture, that extraordinary judgments indicated extraordinary guilt. The expression, "he was wounded" (5), or more literally, pierced through, was fulfilled in the piercing of the hands and feet and side of the Saviour. "The chastisement of our peace," signifies the chastisement or punishment by which our peace is effected. In the scourging of our Lord was fulfilled the prediction of his stripes. Along with the declaration of Christ's substitution, there is the confession of man's need of it (6), which was the cause which made such sufferings necessary;—sheep without a shepherd which have lost their way, and that in a country where flocks are exposed to the ravages of wild beasts, as in the scene of this prophecy, are the very picture of helplessness, and such was and is the condition of man, needing to be sought as well as saved.—The marginal and literal meaning of the last clause, "The Lord caused the iniquity of us all to meet on him," is more expressive. It appears to refer to the act of the elders of Israel laying their hands on the head of the sacrifice, which was symbolical of the transference to it of the guilt of the people. It all met on the head of the victim.

7. *He was oppressed, and he was afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.*

The bearing of the Messiah under his sufferings is next represented. All the insult and injury that he sustained at the hands of men not only were not retaliated, not only



were submitted to without reproach, but were received in silence. If he did complain, it was not of the violence of the Jews, but of their unbelief; not of their treatment of his person, but of their rejection of his message; not of the injury done to him, but to themselves. He suffered himself to be led even to death, as the lamb is to the slaughter, without resistance and without complaint.

8, 9. *He was taken from prison and from judgment (or, he was taken away by distress and judgment): and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken (or, was the stroke upon him). And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death (or, deaths); because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.*

Other hardships in his lot are enumerated.<sup>1</sup> There are different opinions as to what particular aggravations of his humiliation are intended in the first of these verses. Lowth translates, "by an oppressive judgment (literally, it is by oppression and judgment) he was taken off." Barnes renders it, "from confinement and a judicial sentence was he taken" (to death). The quotation in Acts viii. 32, is taken from the Septuagint. In his humiliation, his judgment, or proper trial, was taken away, that is, was denied him.—The clause, "who shall declare his generation?" has also been rendered very variously. The word "generation" has been explained of his manner of life, implying that its shame was such as to be indescribable; of his length of life, implying that he would live for ever; of his spiritual posterity, implying that they would be without number; of the men of his age, implying their depravity. By the expression "cut off," is implied the violence of his death. Another indignity was the appointing<sup>2</sup> him his grave with the wicked (9), with

<sup>1</sup> Prison, עֶזְרָא, a shutting up, then constraint, oppression.

<sup>2</sup> He made, from נָתַן, to give; literally, one gave his grave, or his grave was given, or appointed, that is, the arrangement made was that it should be with the wicked.

the thieves, between whom he was crucified. To this indignity, however, although intended for him, he was not actually subjected, for instead of being thrown into the common grave dug for them as malefactors, he was claimed by the rich man of Arimathea and buried in his new tomb. The last clause, "because he had done no violence," may be connected with the previous one as in the common translation, giving the reason why the Saviour, though associated with criminals in his death, was not so in his burial; unlike theirs, his had been a harmless and guileless life, and therefore the distinction between them would be marked and not lost, as would have been the case if they had had in every particular a common fate. Or substituting "although" for "because," the clause may be connected with the first one, thus forming an aggravation of the sin of those who having crucified the Redeemer in a malefactor's room, and given him a malefactor's death, intended for him also a malefactor's grave.

10-12. *Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul (or, when his soul shall make) an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*

What remains of the chapter refers to the gratifying results of Christ's sacrifice; to his well won reward. Although on the part of his murderers the death of Christ was inexcusable and guilty, it was pleasing to the Father. It was as the substitute of sinners that he was called the beloved Son in whom God was well pleased—his elect in whom his soul delighted. The words "his soul," are ambiguous in the original. They may be read either as they stand in the text, or as in the margin, when thy soul

shall make an offering for sin. The meaning is the same either way. The seed of Christ are those who should become new creatures in him, who should be born again of his Spirit. By means of them, as they would be from age to age converted to his service, he might be said to prolong his days. These—a seed and length of days, are among all nations, and were among the Jews particularly, the most desirable of blessings; and here they teach that the sufferings of the Redeemer would not be, as they have not been, in vain, but that he would have the sweet recompense of witnessing a seed of spiritual children—a generation who would serve him; a recompense doubly sweet because eminently pleasing to the Father. Not only is it foretold that he would see fruit from his sufferings,<sup>1</sup> but even plenteous fruit, enough to satisfy him (11). The expression “by his knowledge,” signifies, by the knowledge of him. The word is often used to denote all that is required on the part of the sinner to his salvation, as when it is said, “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.” It is added in that passage, that the effect of this knowledge is the same as what is attributed to it in the text, viz., justification,<sup>2</sup> “That I may be found in him not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith,” Phil. iii. 8, 9. That which places the Redeemer in a position to justify many, is his having borne their iniquities. And this is the origin of his power not only to bless his people, but also to punish his enemies (12). Lowth translates here, “therefore will I distribute to him the many for his portion; and the mighty people shall he share for his spoil.” Hengsten-

<sup>1</sup> עָמַל, travail. The original does not give the common English signification of the word. It means simply labour to weariness, toil.

<sup>2</sup> Justify, from יָצַד, which is the parallel of the Greek δικαιώω, and the English justify.

berg, "I will give him the mighty for a portion." The reference here, particularly according to these readings, appears to be to his judgments of the nations in the great day of the Lord. It is specially against the great ones of the earth that these judgments of the last days are said to be directed, see xxiv. 21. It is then that the Lord will cause the arrogance of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. It is of the mighty and of the princes of the earth—of mighty men, and men of war, that his sacrifice shall then consist. And what will invest him with the merit, the commission, and the power thus to extinguish sin on earth, and to bruise the head of Satan, will be his atonement—his having poured out his soul unto death. When that work was finished, *all* power was given unto him; and that power, which he now possesses, but has long refrained from using, he will then put forth. The foregoing description of his sufferings is thus suitably introduced in a portion of the prophecy which relates chiefly to his reign on earth, inasmuch as these sufferings form the foundation of his throne. The whole is a commentary upon such a passage as Phil. ii. 6-11, "He became obedient to death, even the death of the cross. *Wherefore* God also hath highly exalted him." If the other view be preferred, that the allusion is to the spiritual conquest of men by Christ, whereby Satan and his angels are spoiled, it is equally scriptural. In other places, the redemption of the believer is represented as the conquest of Satan—as the spoiling of that spoiler. Christ binds the strong man, and spoils him of his goods. God delivers from the power of darkness. Christ has spoiled principalities and powers, and, as in the ancient triumph, has made a show of them openly. After noticing the reward of Christ, the chapter closes with a summary of his work, describing the extent of it, the infamy of it, the object of it, and the love with which it was executed. The passage forms a beauti-



ful climax. First, there is the general fact of the death of Christ—a fact, wonderful had it happened in the least humiliating circumstances, the Lord of life submitting to death—"he hath poured out his soul unto death." Next, the fact, still more wonderful, that that death was of the most humbling character—was the vilest of all deaths—the Judge of all condemned as a criminal at the bar of man, and crucified as a slave—"he was numbered with the transgressors." Next, and still more wonderful, the fact that he who was pure and spotless suffered as a sinner, bearing real although imputed guilt, suffering, therefore, justly; guilty in the eye of the Father and of the law—"he bare the sin of many." And next, and crowning all, in this series of wonders the most wonderful, the fact that he who endured such shame and agony was the last on whom they should have been inflicted, was the most benevolent of beings—was the very model of love; for all that he suffered did not dry up the fountain of his compassion; it was an ocean without a bottom, without a shore; he returned blessing for cursing—"he made intercession for his betrayers and murderers."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Scripture very frequently uses the climax in representing both the suffering and the glory of the Redeemer, as in a passage already quoted, which combines the subjects of this chapter, Phil. ii. 6-11. In that passage there is a double climax, first, in the description of the humiliation of Christ, which descends step by step, from one degree to a lower; and then in the description of his exaltation, which ascends step by step, from one degree to a higher. In the former, he who was in the form of God, who, without robbing God of his honour, could call himself the fellow of the Almighty, made himself of no reputation, divested himself for a time of the glory which as God he had possessed from all eternity—one step in the descent. Next, he took upon him the form of a servant, "I come to do thy will, O God"—another step in the descent. Next, he was made in the likeness of man—a still larger step in the direction downwards. Next, he humbled himself, not only becoming man, but man in the most humble, despised, oppressed condition—a step still lower. Next, he became obedient to death—a step lower still. And last of all, that death was the death of the cross; among deaths, even among infamous deaths, the most infamous. Then commences the ascending climax, which represents the journey of the

## CHAPTER LIV.

THIS chapter, although differing in subject from the preceding, is yet closely connected with it. In the close of the 52d, the declaration is made that the glory of the Redeemer would be in proportion to his shame. The degree of this shame, which would determine the degree of glory, is detailed in the 53d chapter, which concludes with what is nearly a reiteration of the same truth, that *because* the Redeemer had suffered, *therefore* would he be exalted. This glory is often represented in connexion with restored prosperity to Israel. It is upon them that

Saviour from the lowest point of his humiliation to the highest of his exaltation. God hath highly exalted him : he hath raised him from the grave to the throne of heaven—one step in his exaltation. Next, he hath given him a name that is above every name. High as his throne is, still higher is his fame. There are other thrones on high : “I saw thrones,” says John ; All the saved are made kings to God : there are other glorious names above—all the saved have the new name—but no name so glorious as that of the Lamb that was slain. A still higher step is, that to him every knee shall bow. None else of those who are seated on thrones, and have glorious names, receive adoration—“See thou do it not,” said one of them to the beloved and highly favoured disciple ; that is paid neither to saint nor angel, but to the man Christ Jesus. It is not paid fully yet. It is paid in part already—of things in heaven every knee bows to him ; but it will also be paid to him by things on earth, by rebellious man—a higher step in his exaltation ; and even by things under the earth, by rebellious angels—a step still higher. Then, on the day of his appearing, when of things above, around, below—of things in heaven, on earth, in hell, every knee, “either in grateful adoration or in crouching agony,” shall bow to him ; and every tongue, “either triumphant with joy or trembling with terror,” shall confess that he is Lord ; the mysterious circle of his mediatorial history shall be completed ; the Sun of righteousness shall shine forth from his eclipse ; the last step in his exaltation shall have been taken.

the glory of the Lord is to arise. It is of their final recovery from their wanderings and from their sins that it is said, "The Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel." In this chapter is detailed the prosperous condition of Israel at last, the glass in which the glory of the Redeemer will be seen. The common exposition of the passage, which applies part to the Babylonish captivity, and part—what will not so apply—to the Church in future ages, is as unsatisfactory as it is incongruous. The occurrence of such expressions as "thy seed shall make the desolate places to be inhabited," "with great mercies will I gather thee," show, as strongly at least as it is possible for language to do, that the prophecy is literal, and is to be literally fulfilled. The Jews are not mentioned by name throughout, but much of the language is clearly to be understood of them, and in the third verse, the party spoken of is distinguished from the Gentiles, and can therefore mean only the Jews.

1. *Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear ; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child : for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord.*

Israel is here called on to rejoice in her altered and bettered circumstances. The period of her history indicated by the words "barren," "desolate," is pointed out by the parallel expressions of her widowhood, or time when she was lost, and continued without her maker, her husband—of her being forsaken for a small moment—of God hiding his face from her ; and must therefore refer to the period generally of her estrangement from God, which, after various seasons of conciliation, was completed at the destruction of Jerusalem, and has not yet ceased. The comparison used in the first part of the chapter is a common one in expressing the relation of God to Israel, Jer. iii. 14 ; xxxi. 32. During her long period of separation from God, and of cruel oppression on

the part of men, instead of increasing and flourishing, she has been barren and desolate. But when she shall return to the Lord, and his favour shall revisit her, greater prosperity—a larger numerical increase—it is here taught, will be given her, when thus desolate, but to be so no more, than she ever possessed in her first condition, when the married wife, or before her estrangement from her Maker. The accession of the remnant of Jews, till then left among all nations, together with the accession, at that time, of these Gentile nations themselves, will constitute the increase of Israel then converted, forming, together, the Church of Christ, over which he shall reign. This view is quite in harmony with the quotation of the first verse made by Paul, Gal. iv. 26, 27. Israel restored and converted, together with Gentiles then joined to them, the whole united in serving him who shall then reign in Mount Zion, and shall be King over all the earth, will form the Jerusalem which is from above, which, unlike the Jerusalem of former days—desolate and in bondage, is free; which is the mother, not of the Jewish nation only, but of all—of Jew and Gentile. Then Israel, no longer unconverted, and therefore barren and desolate, shall rejoice, for her barrenness shall have issued in the accession to her of others more numerous than ever were her own sons in the days of her greatest prosperity. The same call to sing and rejoice, in reference to the same period, is often addressed to the nation: “Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad, and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. The Lord hath taken away thy judgments. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy,” Zeph. iii. 14-17. The view given of the verse is corroborated by other passages, as in Hosea ii., where Israel’s calamities are represented as arising from, and continuing during, her separation from God her husband; but by judgment she will be brought to return to the



Lord, when she shall sing as in the days of her youth, and shall call the Lord Ishi, my husband.

2, 3. *Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations : spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes ; for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left ; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited.*

The increase of the nation is here farther developed in an allusion to the usage with a tent. As an eastern family dwelling in a tent would require, in order to provide for an increase to their numbers, to extend the curtain or covering, and to lengthen the cords and strengthen the stakes which supported it, so Israel is represented as requiring enlarged room for her population which are said to burst forth on all sides. The same thing is foretold in other places. It is then that her "waste and desolate places shall be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants," and that the children which she shall have after she has lost the other shall say, "The place is too strait for me ; give place to me, that I may dwell," see xlix. 19, 20. It is then that "Israel shall be the third with Egypt and with Assyria," these two being annexed to Judea, and forming a much more extended kingdom. In the clause, "thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles," that gift which is promised to the Redeemer, "I will give thee the heathen for thy heritage," is represented as being made to Israel the chosen and honoured instrument by which the Gentiles will be brought to know the Lord. Then also, as is added, and is asserted over and over again in this book, the now desolate cities of Judea shall be inhabited. The same events are often presented together in other places. Thus, in Ezekiel xxxvi. 33, we read : "In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities, I will also cause you to dwell in the cities ; and thou shalt say, the waste, and desolate, and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited. Then the heathen round about you shall know

that I the Lord build the ruined places.—I will increase the house of Israel with men like a flock; the waste cities shall be filled with flocks of men.”

4-6. *Fear not ; for thou shalt not be ashamed : neither be thou confounded ; for thou shalt not be put to shame : for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. For thy Maker is thine husband ; The Lord of hosts is his name ; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel ; The God of the whole earth shall he be called. For the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken, and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God.*

To counteract the doubts that might exist in the breast of the nation, during the long season of their adversity, of so bright a dawn issuing from so dark a night, the assurance is added (4), that so blissful would the condition of Judah become, that her shame and reproach, which might seem engraven too deeply in her history and on her heart to be ever effaced, would be altogether forgotten. Similar encouragement is often conveyed to her. Thus, when God is alluded to as hiding his face from Israel, it is added, that while the makers of idols shall go to confusion, “Israel shall be saved, and shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end,” xlv. 16.—“The shame of thy youth,” is shame for the sins of her youth, when she was a wife of youth, for which she was widowed by the Lord; and “the reproach of her widowhood,” her long time of separation from him, during which she has been a hissing among all nations. The reason of the removal of her fears and shame is, that then her estrangement from her Maker will cease—he will be again her husband (5). This comparison is often employed in describing the restored favour of God to Israel: “I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness and in judgment, and in loving-kindness and in mercies:” and what is meant by this is taught when it is added, “I will say to them who were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say,

Thou art my God," Hos. ii. 19, 23. The same reference as here to the power of God, along with the reference to his relation to Israel as peculiarly their God, is often introduced, as if intended as a pledge that he was able to perform what he promised. The conversion of the whole world is represented, as in other places, as following that of Israel. When the Lord shall give to Christ the throne of his father David, he shall also "give him the heathen for his heritage;" "The Lord shall be king over all the earth." He who will finally be reconciled to Israel is the Lord of hosts, who will at last be the God of the whole earth; and though, for a time, he has cast her off for her sins, so that she has been like a woman forsaken by her husband—even, a more extreme case, like a wife married in youth broken-hearted—yet he will again call her to himself (6). The act is represented as already past and done—thy Maker *is* thine husband—the Lord *hath* called thee—as in other places, although the events were still future, a form of prophecy fitted to give increased assurance of the certainty of its accomplishment.—The expression "a wife of youth," may denote the keenness of grief when forsaken or refused, as it is in the text, the affections being warmest in youth; or rather, it may refer to the circumstance that Israel was such, that it was in her youth as a nation that she was selected as the object of divine favour: or both ideas may be included, as in the following passage:—"I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals," Jer. ii. 2.

7, 8. *For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.*

There is here a contrast between the sorrows and the future joys of the nation when gathered and blessed. Protracted in duration and grievous in character as has been her shame, it will yet be short and light in com-

parison of her glory : how great, then, must that glory be? In other places it is said that in double proportion to Israel's curse will be her blessing, see lxi. 7.

9, 10. *For this is as the waters of Noah unto me : for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth ; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed ; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee.*

Similar declarations are reiterated, first negatively, to the effect that Israel would not again be visited with the wrath of her Maker (9) ; and next positively, that his favour towards her would be perpetual (10). The judgments of Israel, like the flood in the days of Noah, when once expended, will never be renewed.—The expression, “ I have sworn,” implies that the Lord had given assurance in the most solemn way, and implies that all his declarations of ultimate peace to Israel would be observed as sacredly as his promise that the waters of the flood should not a second time destroy all flesh. Besides, the possession of the land had been made the subject of covenant with Abraham on the part of God (10) : “ I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations for an everlasting covenant,” Gen. xvii. 7, 8. The import of the expression “ everlasting,” which varies according to the duration of the subject of it, is determined in the case of Israel by the declaration, “ As the new heavens and the new earth shall remain before me, so shall your seed and your name remain.” The covenant with Abraham is that covenant of peace which shall not be removed ; it promised, it secured ultimate and continued peace. In the departure of the mountains and the removal of the hills, there may be allusion to those convulsions of nature which are described as characteristic of the time when the Lord shall judge among the nations.



11, 12. *O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted! behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones.*

The prophecy passing from general assurances of mercy and peace to Israel at last, unfolds more particularly some of her blessings when she shall cease to be the sport of every nation, like a wreck at the mercy of wind and wave. The picture is drawn of a building not only adorned with, but in a measure constructed of, the most precious stones,<sup>1</sup> either as emblematical of Israel's holy and prosperous condition, or as descriptive of the city of Jerusalem then. A similar but more detailed description of the holy, the new Jerusalem, is given in Rev. xxi. 18. Some who understand literally what is foretold of the future glory of Jerusalem, may have little difficulty in understanding this part of the description also literally; and when such an idea is rejected, the passage must be regarded as describing what is still more glorious—what is indescribable—what it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive. Much as Popery has done in decorating her temples with such precious stones as those which are here enumerated, and gorgeous as are the palaces which fancy has introduced into Arabian story, yet here is a description—whether of a reality or emblematical—of a splendour which outstrips them all.

13, 14. *And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great*

<sup>1</sup> With fair colours, from צִבּוֹר. The meaning is doubtful. The word occurs in 2 Kings ix. 30, and Jer. iv. 30, where it is translated painting, in reference to the *stibium*, or paint, with which it was customary to tinge the eyelids. Hence it has been translated here, "I will lay thy stones in cement of *stibium*." The same word is also used in the account of the materials of the temple, 1 Chron. xxix. 2, where it appears to express a particular colour in stones. It is more natural to understand it so here.—"Windows," a derivative from שֶׁמֶשׁ, the sun. It is generally translated parapets, battlements, following the Septuagint.—"Borders," that is, the borders of the city, or the walls which surrounded it.

shall be *the peace of thy children. In righteousness shalt thou be established : thou shalt be far from oppression ; for thou shalt not fear : and from terror ; for it shall not come near thee.*

While such will be the ornaments of Jerusalem, knowledge, peace (13), and righteousness (14), will be the ornaments—the beautiful garments of the people. These are the characteristics of the times when this earth shall be added to the dominions of the Messiah, and he shall reign over it in righteousness, and can be applied to no past period of Israel's history. The words “in righteousness” may be understood as a characteristic of the nation, or of Christ's government over it ; or rather, in the more literal signification of the words, of the manner in which that government will be effected. It will be by the righteous or just judgments of the enemies of Israel, when Christ will “lay righteousness to the plummet ;” then the oppressions and fears under which they have so long groaned will for ever cease.

15-17. *Behold, they shall surely gather together, but not by me : whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake. Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work ; and I have created the waster to destroy. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper ; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord ; and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.*

The previous allusion to the righteous manner of the re-establishment of the nation in their own land, and to their liberty and peace there, introduces a notice of the destruction of their enemies. The gathering together of all the nations against Jerusalem, so often referred to, will be followed by their downfall (15). It is they who are to be scattered like chaff before the wind. The words “not by me,” or, not from me, cannot mean, not by my appointment or permission, for this can be said of no event. God overrules the designs of his enemies for his own purposes. They will be the spirits of devils who

go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty, Rev. xvi. 14. Up to the period indicated the oppressors of Israel have been raised up by God and prospered by him for the punishment of his guilty people, but that will not be the case with these last enemies ; he will not prosper their work. They will be assembled not for Israel's destruction, but for their own. The verse implies that the Lord will then be on the side of Israel, and will be turned against her enemies.—“ For thy sake,” is literally, “ unto thee,” implying, as taught elsewhere, that Israel will be the instrument of their punishment. To assure Israel of her security when the Lord would be on her side, there follows (16) a declaration that the maker of weapons of war, and the waster, or spoiler, who uses them, are both the creation of God, and with him on their side why should they fear? Hitherto the enemies of Israel have prevailed against her in their violence ; and not less remarkably in their calumnies, for who has been the object of such calumny as she? But then neither hand nor tongue shall be lifted up successfully against her (17). Of her final prosperity, it is added, that it is secured to the nation when they shall be the servants of the Lord, as a heritage, the surest title of all ; and that their establishment in righteousness in their own land will be the Lord's doing, and therefore for the Lord's glory.

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## CHAPTER LV.

THIS chapter and the 53d have been regarded as the most precious in the book of Isaiah, and are the two most familiar to the Christian. The former consists of a series

of pressing invitations to embrace the offers of Christ, and of motives for doing so. The only question is in regard to the period when these offers are made in correspondence with the circumstances specified in the context. It is usual to apply the passage to past time—to the period when Christ and his apostles besought men to repent and believe the gospel. Doubtless the invitations here made were addressed to the Jews of that day, but there are circumstances interwoven with this prophetic offer of the gospel which indicate that the eye of the prophet, if it embraced the first offer of the gospel, passed beyond it and rested on that period when, in immediate connexion with the final conversion of Jews and Gentiles, the gospel shall be preached to all nations. That it refers particularly to a period still future, appears from its contextual connexion—from the language of the 4th verse, which will then in a much fuller sense than now be applicable to Christ—from the conversion of the Gentiles being represented as an occurrence about to be realized—from Israel being described as glorified, an event still to come—from the success of the word of God in those days—and from what is said of the fertility of the land of Judea. The same circumstances show that it is the Jewish nation which is here primarily addressed. Others of the richest promises of Scripture are connected with, and will be fully realized only at the same period; for example, “I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely,” Rev. xxi. 6. This promise is given when Christ shall make all things new—when he that overcometh shall inherit all things. Then the believer removed nearer to the spring of living water—placed by the banks of the river of life—shall drink much more fully than now of that water of life of which they who drink never thirst any more. Then he will drink of the *fountain* of the water of life.

1. *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that*



*hath no money : come ye, buy, and eat ; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price.*

The chapter opens with a general invitation to the Jewish nation to accept the blessings of salvation, which are represented by the most common, abundant, and free, and therefore most necessary and valuable, temporal blessings—bread, water, milk, and wine ; the last also being in the East, at the date of the prophecy, an article of common use. The period to which the passage refers, that, viz., when these offers shall be addressed successfully to the Jews as a nation, is pointed out very distinctly in Zech. xii., and xiii. 1, where it is said that in the day of final deliverance from their enemies—in the day when the spirit of grace and of supplications shall be poured upon them, there shall be a fountain opened to them for sin and for uncleanness ; of which fountain it is said unto them nationally in the language of Isaiah, “ come ye to the waters.” To the Jews, as a nation, the fountain of Christ’s blood has been a fountain sealed, as Christ has been a Saviour rejected. Of the same period it is said, “ I will gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean,” Ezek. xxxvi. 24, 25. But not by Jews only, but by Gentiles also, will the gospel invitations be then accepted. In that mountain “ shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things,” xxv. 6. The freeness of the blood-bought blessings of the new covenant is represented by their being offered without money ; and the class by whom they are appropriated are they who thirst for them, that is, who have an appetite, a taste for this spiritual food.

2, 3. *Wherefore do ye spend (or, weigh) money for that which is not bread ? and your labour for that which satisfieth not ? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me : hear, and your soul shall live ; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.*

The invitation of the previous verse is enforced by an appeal to the unsatisfactory character of every other pursuit and gratification whatever. God is the object which the gospel sets before men. That object satisfies man; he who fills the universe can fill the soul, but no other object can: even by the confession of their fondest worshippers and most devoted slaves, pleasure, wealth, ambition, honour, and all the host of idols, whose name is legion, which are made the substitutes of God, are not satisfying, do not fill the soul; even when their cup is drained they leave a void. God—to the sinner God in Christ—alone is to the soul what bread is to the hungry man; the others are not bread. To feed on them is to “feed on ashes,” to “feed on wind,” to substitute broken cisterns for the fountain of living waters: “This bud shall yield no meal.” Of God alone as its object can it be said, “let your soul delight itself in fatness.” Still, excellent as the knowledge and enjoyment of the Lord are, they need to be pressed on men’s acceptance. He is represented as pleading that they may but hearken unto him, implying that not only will they not *go* unto him that they may have life, which is implied in the “come unto me” of the first verse; but that they will not even hear him. The ear which is open to every other voice is shut against his. This indignity which is rarely offered to a fellow-creature is reserved for him; as similarly men are called on to look, to open, to turn unto him, implying that the ear, the eye, the heart, are together closed, the back turned to him alone. While the picture is true universally of the race of man, it is so pre-eminently of the Jews, to whom the doctrine of the Cross has been hitherto a stumblingblock. The clause, “I will make an everlasting covenant with you,” implies that the promises made to David will then be fulfilled. That covenant—that he would establish his seed for ever, and build up his throne to all generations, has been long suspended,

not forgotten,—“The mountains shall depart, but the covenant of my peace shall not be removed from thee.”

4, 5. *Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not ; and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee, because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel ; for he hath glorified thee.*

The promise to David, that his throne should be built up for ever, is here represented prophetically as fulfilled. Christ, to whom that promise referred, is described as given to the Jewish nation to rule over them. This relates to the time when he shall come to take unto himself his kingdom. The same event is similarly described in other places : “In that day”—the day of Jacob’s trouble—“I will burst thy bonds :—but they shall serve the Lord their God, and David (Christ) their king, whom I will raise up unto them,” Jer. xxx. 8, 9 ; “I will save my flock, and I will set up one shepherd over them, even my servant David,” Ezek. xxxiv. 23. From the commencement of the ministry of Christ onwards, he has been a witness—a witness to men in behalf of God. That title is given to him by John in the same connexion as by Isaiah, viz., in reference to the establishment of his kingdom on earth : “From Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first-begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth,—behold he cometh with clouds.” In the text also Christ is represented in two distinct characters,—as a witness, and as a ruler or king, as the Prince of the kings of the earth. The former character he has exercised for 1800 years, the latter he has not yet assumed—he is not yet a leader<sup>1</sup> and commander to Israel. But at the time referred to by the prophet, the time of the conversion of Jew and Gentile, the latter character will be assumed. When on one occasion the disciples

<sup>1</sup> Leader, מִנִּי, a prince, so translated in reference to the Messiah in Daniel ix. 25.

asked him, "Tell us when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world (age)?" the conclusion of his answer was, "The gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come," Matt. xxiv. 3, 14. The long period of witnessing for God will then pass into the time of acting; and for Christ to act, even although both the heathen and the people rage, and the kings of the earth and its rulers take counsel together against him—for him to act will be for him to reign; and the witness will become the ruler and the commander—the Prince of the kings of the earth. Another concomitant of these days, besides the reign of Christ and the conversion of the Jews, is the conversion of the Gentiles (5). Israel is represented, first, as the active instrument of effecting this—"Thou shalt call;" and next, as the passive instrument by which it is brought about—the honour put upon her by God in delivering and prospering her at last, attracting all nations. The passage seems intended to express the use of both means combined in extending salvation to the ends of the earth. It is not necessary to understand the pronoun "thou" directly of Christ, as the same effect is ascribed elsewhere to the Jews as his instruments; and by so understanding it here, there is avoided the change of person, which, although not unusual, is not to be supposed unless where obviously required. Sometimes the conversion of Gentile nations is represented as the Lord's doing: "The Lord God which gathereth Israel saith, Yet will I gather others to him beside those that are gathered to him," lvi. 8. In other cases it is ascribed directly to the Jews as his instrument: "As ye were a curse among the nations, so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing," Zech. viii. 13; "The remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass," Micah v. 7; and as to her passive influence, from



the lesson that her restored glory will teach the world, it is written, "The heathen shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes," Ezek. xxxvi. 23.

6, 7. *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near : Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man (or, the man of iniquity) his thoughts ; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him ; and to our God, for he will abundantly (or, multiply to) pardon.*

In view of the coming of Christ not only to bless his people, but to judge his enemies, men are warned to seek him while he may be found. The lesson, while universally applicable, is so particularly to the days which shall precede the coming of the Son of man to reign in righteousness. The same warning occurs in the same connexion in other places. Thus, in the second psalm, which is prophetic of the establishment of Christ's kingdom on earth, and of the judgments of the nations which shall precede it, it is said, "Be wise *now* therefore, O ye kings." Again, "The day of the Lord is very terrible, therefore also *now* turn ye even unto me with all your heart," Joel ii. 11, 12. Taken in connexion with the coming of Christ to punish the nations of the earth for their iniquity, such passages as Prov. i. 28, "Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer ;" or Matt. xxv. 10-12, "Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, I know you not"—are easy of explanation. On a former occasion of national judgment, the season of invitation and of hope ceased when the windows of heaven were opened, and the rain came upon the earth. The antediluvian world saw their danger before it cut them off ;—many, by climbing trees, or ascending mountains, or taking refuge in boats, may have lived for hours or days after the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and an opportunity have thus been given them of calling on God ; but it would then be too late, for the door of the ark was shut. So, on the

next and last great occasion of national judgment, when the wrath of the Lamb is kindled but for a little, the moment that it begins to burn, the hour of mercy will be past ;—when men cry he will not hear—when they knock he will not open. Before that day come, men—and particularly the men of the last days, are urged to turn to the Lord *now*. This supposes the departure from every evil way and thought (7). Conversion does not consist in this ; it is represented here as a separate thing : a separation from sin is not necessarily a dying to sin—is not necessarily a return to God ; but the movement towards him implies and requires a movement away from sin. This movement, which is the outputting of man's will, and yet originates with and is given effect to by God, like the stretching forth of the leprous hand, or the palsied arm, or the rising of the feeble body from the couch, is met on the part of God with mercy and abundant pardon. He sees the returning prodigal while yet afar off—he meets him half way.

8, 9. *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

Such a reception, such pardon, might seem impossible ; particularly might it appear so to the Jews at last, after their national rejection of the Messiah for so many hundred years ; but to meet this unbelief, it is added, that God's thoughts are not as man's thoughts, but excel them as the heavens are higher than the earth (9). Man might not extend forgiveness to his fellow-man in such circumstances, but the things that are impossible with men are possible with God. Man pardons reluctantly, partially, imperfectly ; but he is "ready to forgive," he forgives "*all manner of sin and blasphemy*," he "*covereth*," he "*blotteth out*" transgression. In this, as in everything, he bestows his gifts on a scale the most magnificent—one

worthy of himself. And does it not need thoughts and ways high above those of man as the heavens are above the earth, to meet the return of Israel with abundant pardon ?

10, 11. *For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater ; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth : it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.*

To the general statement of the munificence of Divine grace, there is added a special promise for Israel—a declaration that she would be the object of it. As the waters of the earth do not descend on the earth in vain, but in due time cover it with food for man, so, at the period indicated in the prophecy, the word of God—his invitation to come to the fountain thus opened to the house of David—will, it is declared, effect his purpose in Israel, and fill that garden of the Lord with fruit. The same figure is employed in other descriptions of the same event : “ He (Christ) shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth,” Ps. lxxii. 6 ; “ I will be as the dew unto Israel,” Hos. xiv. 5. The allusion to the snow is quite in keeping with its importance among the productions of nature, on whose face it at first sight appears a blemish. It adds materially to the fertility of the earth, acting as a mantle to defend the tender herb from the frosts of winter ; and in the warmer latitudes of the East it forms on the lofty mountain tops a reservoir of water, ever fresh, melting gradually in the summer months, and thus feeding the streams below, forming a fountainhead of “ living,” ever-flowing waters, stored up in that form and position in which alone they could be preserved in warm latitudes, sweet and pure.

12, 13. *For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace : the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing,*

*and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree : and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.*

The happy and peaceful condition of the nation when Jerusalem shall be holy, is then expressed. The clause "ye shall go out with joy," appears to refer to their gathering from all nations. The gladness of that return is often adverted to: "The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads." The blissfulness of their condition is also expressed by the common figure of representing nature as joining in the universal joy on the return of Israel to their own land. Then "the wilderness and the solitary place" are said to be "glad for them." The chapter closes with predicting, that when God shall bless the people, he shall also bless the land (13). Briers and thorns formed one of the threatened curses of Judea, v. 6, and its truth is attested by every traveller. But not more sure is its present desolation than is its future fertility. Of Judea it is foretold, "The land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden;" "I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle." Thus restored, it will remain a perpetual memorial of the faithfulness of the Lord. The end of Israel's adoption will then at last be served—God will be glorified in them.

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## CHAPTER LVI.

IN that portion of the prophecy which is continued in this chapter there is contained another call to righteousness, on the ground of the near manifestation of the Lord's righteousness in judging among the nations (1, 2), together



with an intimation that the Gentiles will participate in the blessings then imparted to Israel (3-8). At the 9th verse, a new subject, and one which is antecedent in time to the others, is introduced, viz., that of the judgments of Israel, which may be regarded as applying to the whole course of her punishment, followed by a statement of the cause of it, which extends into the next chapter, and is introduced at intervals in the two succeeding, viz., the sin of the nation, commencing (10-12) with that of the Jewish rulers. The guilt of Israel was naturally a prominent object in the prophetic landscape, and hence it often arrests the attention of Isaiah.

1, 2. *Thus saith the Lord, Keep ye judgment (or, equity), and do justice: for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed. Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.*

The first verse is very much a repetition of the 6th and 7th verses of the previous chapter, calling the Jews to do right, because the manifestation of the Lord's righteousness was near. The dealings of God at last included under this expression, comprehend not only the salvation of Israel, but, in the first instance, righteous judgment against both Jew and Gentile. The time referred to is when "he shall judge the people with righteousness," or righteously—when "he will lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet." The appeal to the nation is, that if they would escape the judgments of that day, they must cease to do evil, and learn to do well. The same appeal is made at greater length in chap. i. 16-20, where also the righteous judgments of which Israel is warned are more minutely described (24-31). The appeal is supported by an assurance of the blessedness of attending to it, and of ceasing from sin<sup>1</sup> (2). Such will escape

<sup>1</sup> "The man." אָנָשׁ, like אָדָם, often signifies one of inferior rank. So of the time referred to, it is said, "The meek shall increase their joy in the

the woes which shall overtake the transgressor, when Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and shall participate in the blessings experienced when Israel shall be like a watered garden. The allusion to the keeping of the Sabbath is worthy of notice. It is introduced similarly in ch. lviii. 13. This mention of its observance in connexion with the final return of Israel to their country and their king, furnishes one of the most forcible demonstrations of its perpetuity. Nothing could be plainer than the language of the last chapter of this book. Of the period when it is said that the Lord will extend peace to Jerusalem like a river—when he shall comfort her as one whom his mother comforteth, it is written, that then “from one Sabbath to another shall all flesh come and worship before the Lord.” This institution of Paradise—this surviving fragment from the wreck of humanity which is still floating on the waters—will be perpetuated in the new earth.

3-8. *Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the Lord, speak, saying, The Lord hath utterly separated me from his people : neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree. For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs, that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant ; Even unto them will I give in mine house, and within my walls, a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters : I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant ; even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer : their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar ; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people. The Lord God (or, Adonai Jehovah), which gathereth the outcasts of Israel, saith, Yet will I gather others to him, besides those that are gathered unto him (or, to his gathered).*

While in the period referred to, that, viz., of the reign of Christ in Zion and over the earth, the Sabbath is to be

Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel, for the terrible one is brought to nought,” xxix. 19.

perpetuated, showing thereby that it was not a mere temporary Jewish peculiarity—what is such is to be done away. The Gentile world, as well as the Jews, are to form the subjects of the Messiah's kingdom. The stranger and the eunuch were both excluded by the law of Moses from the privileges of Israel. These have now long ceased, on account of her sins; but when restored and converted, new and better privileges will be bestowed on her. From these, however, there will be no exclusion as before in the case of Gentiles, represented here by the stranger and the eunuch. They will have no cause for the complaint, "The Lord hath utterly separated me from his people." The way was paved for this state of things when Christ broke down the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile, but it has not yet been realized. The separation between the two is yet virtually as complete as ever. They will be made one only when Christ shall reign in Zion.—What is before stated negatively of the Gentiles—the class represented by the eunuchs and strangers—is then stated positively; first of the eunuchs (4, 5), and then of the strangers (6, 7). By the expressions "my house," "my walls," "my holy mountain," is clearly to be understood mount Zion—the temple; but how far the supposition of a literal temple and temple ordinances is warranted by this passage, it is impossible to determine. There may be intended nothing more than the declaration of equal blessings to Jew and Gentile. As to have no place or name in the temple, as was the case of old with the eunuch and the stranger, indicated that they lay under disadvantages from which others were exempt, so to say that they will have a place there, may merely intimate that these distinctions will cease under the Messiah's reign. The passage, however, taken in its natural significancy, appears to warrant the supposition of a restored temple and temple service in Jerusalem, adapted to the circumstances of Israel and the world then. The text is corroborated

by many others. In reference to a period certainly still future, it is foretold, "Because of thy temple at Jerusalem shall kings bring presents unto thee," Ps. lxxviii. 29; "I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the Lord," Is. lxvi. 21. Such an expectation is not discouraged by the circumstance that the Jews are said to have got recent permission from the Porte to build a temple on mount Zion; particularly if there be truth in the rumour now afloat, that large funds have been already contributed for its erection, and that the model of it is the temple described in the end of Ezekiel. That the application of the whole to the first coming of Christ is impracticable, is evident from such expressions as the temple being called a house of prayer for all people, and from what is said of the Lord gathering the outcasts of Israel—events which have not occurred yet—and from the whole scope of the context. There is an evident similarity between the bringing of the strangers to God's holy mountain, and those passages which foretell the gathering of Gentiles to mount Zion: "The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and all nations shall flow unto it; for out of Zion shall go forth the law." The clause, "for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people," is applied by three of the evangelists, not to a figurative, but to the literal temple; but in two of these, the important words, "to all people," are omitted, suggesting the inference that in so far the application could not then be made. And even though these words had been introduced, they are not represented as being fulfilled in the days of the apostles; nor does the fact permit such an application. The house of the Lord in Jerusalem has never yet been a house of prayer for all nations. That the whole passage refers to the conversion of the Gentiles is determined by the 8th verse. Those that are gathered unto Israel are such as remain scattered in all nations after the first re-



turn of the Jews to the status of a nation—they that are recovered the second time. But in addition to these, it is said, “Yet will I gather others to him.” Then will be the gathering of Gentile nations, when more shall be the children of the desolate than of the married wife: “I will gather all nations and tongues, and they shall come and see my glory.”

9. *All ye beasts of the field, come to devour ; yea, all ye beasts in the forest.*

A new subject is introduced, one which could never be inappropriately presented to the notice of the Jewish nation, and never more appropriately than side by side with her final glory, viz., her judgments, and the cause of them, her sins. This verse appears to allude to the whole period of her troubles, representing her as to be subjected to the inroad and spoliation of other nations, as the beasts of the forest rush upon and devour their prey. The same figure is so used in other places. Thus in Jer. xii. 7, 9: “I have given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hand of her enemies. Mine heritage is unto me as a speckled bird ; the birds round about are against her : come ye, assemble all the beasts of the field, come to devour.” Similar is the description in Ps. lxxx. 8, which also describes the punishment of the nation from its commencement to its close. The fulfilment of the prediction is written in every page of their history since the God of Israel hid his face from them. The question is not, what nation has counted that people lawful prey, oppressing and spoiling them ? but, what nation has not done so ? The birds around have been all against her ; all the beasts of the forest have devoured her.

10-12. *His watchmen are blind : they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark ; sleeping (or, dreaming, or, talking in their sleep), lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs (or, strong of appetite) which can never have enough (or, know not to be satisfied), and they are shepherds that cannot understand : they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter. Come*

*ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink ; and to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant.*

The description of Israel's guilt, which commences here, must also be regarded as a general one, as including both the original cause of her judgments and that of their continuance. It goes back in time to their history before their expulsion from their own land, including, or perhaps with special reference to, their more prominent sins at the time when Isaiah prophesied ; these, with those of previous and following generations, provoking and exhausting the divine vengeance. The guilt of their prophets or teachers is first declared. They are charged with ignorance and indolence (10), with avarice and covetousness (11), and with confirmed intemperance (12). Similar allusions are often made to the prominence of the guilt of the teachers and other leaders of the Jewish nation, both in the Old and New Testaments, and to the sins specified here, see i. 23 : " From the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness," Jer. vi. 13 ; " Both prophet and priest are profane ;" " I have seen in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing : they commit adultery, and walk in lies," Jer. xxiii. 11, 14 ; " Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves ! Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool : but ye feed not the flock," Ezek. xxxiv. 2, 3. How severe is the condemnation of the same class by Christ shortly before the vial of divine wrath was poured out on Israel. Blind leaders of the blind, blind guides, hypocrites, fools, and blind, is the common style of his address to them. Such depravity as theirs could be tolerated only by a people proportionally abandoned. The character of their rulers, like a pulse, showed how hopelessly diseased the heart and whole constitution of the nation were.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> " From his quarter," מִקְצָהוּ, literally, " from his end." Without the pronominal suffix, it signifies from (every) end or quarter, Gen. xix. 4. Lowth translates it here " from the highest to the lowest."

## CHAPTER LVII.

ISAIAH having in the previous verses described the depravity of the Jewish prophets, represents, what is a natural consequence of the other, the depravity of the nation at large, the subject which chiefly occupies this chapter. As he here treats of their guilt as the cause of their punishment—as is taught in ver. 17, “for the iniquity of his covetousness was he wroth, and smote him,” the description has to be regarded as referring particularly to the sins of the nation previous to those national judgments to which they led, and which have not yet passed away. In the latter part of the chapter, from verse 12, the cessation of these judgments and the recovery of the divine favour are announced.

1, 2. *The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart ; and merciful men (or, men of kindness, or, godliness) are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come (or, from that which is evil). He shall enter into peace (or, go in peace) : they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness (or, before him).*

One subject of complaint by the prophet is the heartless apathy with which the death of the righteous was regarded by the nation. Some have supposed that by “the righteous” is here understood some individual distinguished by his righteousness, either Hezekiah or Josiah. Barnes is of opinion, supposing that Isaiah lived in the days of Manasseh, that the whole passage refers to his times, and that the righteous denote those who perished by persecution during his reign. The original, as

well as the English translation, “perisheth” favours, although it does not require, the idea of death by violence. More generally the idea may be that the people were unconcerned by the dying out, the extinction, of the righteous from among them—that the state of things among them was that described by the psalmist, where he exclaims, “Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth; the faithful fail from among the children of men.” See also Micah vii. 2. Equally indifferent are they said to be to the blessings which the righteous reap at death. As they do not regret their loss, so they do not covet their reward. What that portion is, is represented by their removal from all evil, and their possession of peace and rest. It is true, both that the righteous enter into peace at death, and that they go or leave the world in peace (margin). Their bodies also share in it. To these the grave is a bed. While in the case of the wicked death is described as a perishing, a cutting down, a putting out of their light in obscure darkness, in the case of the righteous it is described as a change, a departure, a falling asleep.—The expression “each one walking,” is equivalent with “each one who walks,” that is, such is the end of all who live uprightly.

3, 4. *But draw near hither, ye sons of the sorceress, the seed of the adulterer and the whore. Against whom do ye sport yourselves? against whom make ye a wide mouth, and draw out the tongue? are ye not children of transgression, a seed of falsehood?*

Here commences an enumeration of vices with which the Jewish nation was chargeable, and of which their protracted judgments are the natural, but bitter fruit. It appears to be a description of their national guilt as a whole which is presented;—the whole, and not any one particular portion of their history merely passing before the prophetic eye. The nation is represented as being summoned to hear the charges brought against them, and as being remonstrated with for their wickedness. The



depravity complained of was not of recent origin ; they were not only evil-doers, but the seed of evil-doers. The nation is charged first with sorcery, what is otherwise described as seeking unto them that have familiar spirits, a custom universal among eastern nations, which was often practised by the Jews, and which formed a crime as inexcusable as it was heinous on their part ; for it was the substitution of false prophets for the one Prophet—of the enchantments of wretched men for the oracles of the living God,—a sin of parallel magnitude with that of substituting idols for the one King ; for sorcery is as much contrary to what is due to Christ as the Prophet of his people, as idolatry is contrary to what is due to him as their Prince. The second charge advanced against them is that of adultery and whoredom, which appear to be here used in their literal signification—a class of sins often laid at the door of Israel. Our Lord addressed them in his day as an evil and adulterous generation. Their mockery of God is next indignantly reprovèd (4). The same expressions are used in other places to denote contempt, Ps. xxxv. 21 ; xxii. 7. This contempt of the God of Israel is often adverted to and denounced. Thus, “Woe unto them that say, Let him make speed, and hasten his work, that we may see it : and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it !” v. 18. They are further denominated “children of transgression, a seed of falsehood.” This language is very strong, as if when the deduction of their transgressions and falsehoods was made from their lives, there was over no righteousness, no faithfulness—their whole life was one transgression, one lie. So it is often used regarding them : “Now go write it before them in a table, that this is a rebellious people, lying children.”

5-9. *Enflaming yourselves with idols under every green tree (or, among the oaks), slaying the children in the valleys under the cliffs of the rocks ? Among the smooth stones of the stream is thy portion ;*

*they, they are thy lot : even to them hast thou poured a drink-offering, thou hast offered a meat-offering. Should I receive comfort in these ? Upon a lofty and high mountain hast thou set thy bed : even thither wentest thou up to offer sacrifice. Behind the doors also and the posts hast thou set up thy remembrance : for thou hast discovered thyself to another than me, and art gone up ; thou hast enlarged thy bed, and made thee a covenant with them (or, hewed it for thyself larger than theirs) ; thou lovedst their bed where thou sawest it (or, thou providest room). And thou wentest to (or, respectedst) the king with ointment, and didst increase thy perfumes, and didst send thy messengers far off, and didst debase thyself even unto hell.*

Their idolatries<sup>1</sup> are next specified, one particularly guilty form of which was the sacrifice of their children to Molech in the valley of Hinnom. This barbarous custom, which existed to a great extent among the neighbouring nations, was repeatedly adopted by the Jews, 2 Kings xxiii. 10. The precise nature of the sacrifice is not ascertained, but it appears to have involved the destruction of the children.—“Under every green tree,” is in allusion to the common situation of heathen temples, viz., in the midst of groves, 2 Kings xvi. 4 ; Is. i. 29. Another feature of their idolatry was their worship of stones (16). These, rudely carved into some shape or other, have in all ages been used as idols. In aggravation of Jewish idolatry, these stones are represented as receiving from the hands of the Jews those offerings which the law of Moses required should be made to God. That the nation did go to such a length in their idolatries is elsewhere stated : “Where are their gods, their rock, in whom they trusted, which did eat the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink-offerings ?” Deut. xxxii. 37, 38 ; Jer. vii. 18 ; xix. 10. The meaning of the clause “Among the smooth stones of the stream,” is not clear, from the ambiguity of the original. Barnes, adopting the

<sup>1</sup> “With idols ;” in the margin, “among the oaks ;” in the Hebrew, בְּאִילִם. The derivation may be either from אֵל, God, applied also to idols, or אֵיל, the terebinth, or turpentine tree.

secondary meaning of the Hebrew, translates, "In the dividings of the valley"—the places where the valley divides—"is thy portion;" understanding by the valley, Jehoshaphat. Or the reference may be to valleys generally, as the scenes of idol worship, their retirement and shelter being favourable for heathen idolatries and their accompanying impurities, and being in fact selected for these objects, Jer. ii. 23. The idolatry of Israel is then represented, as also in the first clause of verse 5th, in language descriptive of the ways of the adulteress, a comparison very frequently drawn in the scriptural accounts of the sin of Israel. The use of the figure has been found fault with by the defiled and unbelieving, to whom there is nothing pure; but it possesses the recommendation of expressing in the most significant and intelligible way both God's abhorrence of the sin and its infamy. Verses 7-9 represent, in a continuation of the same figure, the publicity, the shamelessness, and the extent of Israel's idolatries.—The expression "behind the doors," appears to refer to the heathen practice of having household gods in addition to those of the public temples. To what the reference is in the clause "thou wentest to the king" (9), has been disputed. It appears to represent the alliances made, and the intercourse sought, with foreign kings and kingdoms, a course which was expressly prohibited by the command of God, but which Israel often followed, and for which they are often reproved, see xxx. 1. The allusion to perfumes is in keeping with the comparison which runs throughout these verses. These, which were in so common use in the East, the adulteress is supposed to employ.—"To hell," or to the grave, is here equivalent with "to the lowest degree," and indicates the depth of Israel's depravity.

10. *Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way; yet saidst thou not, There is no hope: thou hast found the life (or, living) of thine hand; therefore thou wast not grieved.*

The import of this verse is, that notwithstanding the disappointments which met them in that course of rebellion against the God of Israel on which they had entered, yet they would not abandon it; they found enough of sinful gratification in it to induce them to persevere. The same fact is represented when it is said that the judgments of God failed to recall them from their sin. Thus, "Thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms; therefore the showers have been withholden, and there has been no latter rain, and thou hadst a whore's forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed," Jer. ii. 2, 3. That is said of the nation which is true of the individual sinner. How many are there, even of those to whom this world has fewest thorns, who often weary of the life of sinfulness, but who yet refuse to exchange it for the purer and happier service of Christ, that stream of which they who drink never thirst any more—have no desire for any other. They are soon taught that, in that which they pursue, "there is no hope" of perfect and satisfying happiness; but they will not say or acknowledge this, far less act upon it. It forms the only life the unrenewed know—the only life they seek, and they cleave to it.—The expression "the life of thy hand," possesses in the original the same ambiguity as the English translation, and has been very variously interpreted. The meaning of the whole passage appears to be, that notwithstanding the drawbacks of sin, Israel found in it enough to keep her from repenting and turning to God.

11, 12. *And of whom hast thou been afraid or feared, that thou hast lied, and hast not remembered me, nor laid it to thy heart? have not I held my peace even of old, and thou fearest me not? I will declare thy righteousness, and thy works; for they shall not profit thee.*

These verses describe the futility of every refuge which is apart from God. The first is obscure. It appears to be spoken reproachfully, and to be to this effect, What are the gods whom ye have preferred and feared? Are



they superior to the God of Israel, that to him ye have been so faithless? I have tried clemency with you, but it has failed. Or the last clause may mean, I have dealt so forbearingly with you, that ye have not feared me. The import of the following verse (12) is, that God would expose the folly of that course of rebellion in which Israel had wearied themselves. He would make it appear that their works, viz., the sins before enumerated, would not profit them. The word "righteousness" is used ironically, as is the first clause of the next verse. The meaning is unfolded in what follows (13), where it is said that their companies, whether idols or allies, or other refuges to which they looked, would fail them in the day of need.<sup>1</sup> While such has been the case in the past history of Israel, and every refuge to which they may have looked has passed away like chaff before the wind, leaving them exposed to the full weight of divine judgment, there may be also a reference to their placing, or rather misplacing, confidence in human allies as the means of recovering, or, when recovered, of retaining possession of their own land,—especially as what follows relates to events still to come, to the final restoration of Israel. This appears to be intimated elsewhere, see xxx. 1.

13, 14. *When thou criest, let thy companies deliver thee: but the wind shall carry them all away; vanity shall take them: but he that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain; and shall say, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumblingblock out of the way of my people.*

The prophet now passes (last clause of verse 13th) from the description of Israel's guilt, embracing, as the view does, the whole course of it, and the impotency of every false refuge to which they would betake themselves, to what the Lord would accomplish at last for all who trusted in him: while all opposed to him would be swept away, they that trusted in him would possess the land.—This

<sup>1</sup> "Vanity," הֶבֶל, a breath.

must be understood of the land of Judea—of mount Zion, and, as is shown from the following context, of its final possession by the Jews. It is in such language that their recovery of it is frequently expressed: "Thy people shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land for ever," lx. 21. Preparation for their repossession of it is represented as being made (14). The same very peculiar language is employed in regard to their establishment at last in Jerusalem, lxii. 10. Very similar language is also applied to the coming of Christ to complete the establishment of his kingdom on earth, when his glory shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it—an event contemporaneous with the restored glory of the Jewish nation, xl. 23. There is evident allusion to the eastern custom of individuals preceding distinguished personages on their journey, to open or to put in order the road: so that the least that the language implies, when understood of the return of Israel, is the removal of every hinderance, the taking up of every stumblingblock that may stand in the way of their return, see xl. 3. There have always been, there are at this moment many such, the removal of which would form a political problem of no easy solution and accomplishment; but it is here foretold that, at the proper season, every obstacle will be taken away.—The clause "and shall say," may be either "I shall say,"—*Lowth*; or impersonally, "one shall say," that is, "It shall be said,"—*Barnes*.

15, 16. *For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made.*

Not only is it said that a way would be prepared for the return of Israel, but that the Eternal One would dwell with them. Similar language is applied to the

manifestation of the presence and glory of God made to Israel of old : " Will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth ? " 2 Chron. vi. 18. It is also frequently applied, as in the text, to the manifestation of himself, whatever form that may assume, which shall be given when the Lord shall reign on mount Zion, over not only a ransomed, but then a renewed world : " The place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, when I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever ; and my holy name shall the men of Israel no more defile," Ezek. xliii. 7 ; " Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion : for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord. And the Lord shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again," Zech. ii. 10, 12. His presence will revive Israel, then contrite and humble through her judgments, and brought at last to mourn and be in bitterness for her sins. Then, having been led to humble herself under the mighty hand of God, he will exalt her, at what will be, though to his people he seems to tarry, his own due time. It is to this period that these words refer at greater length : " The Lord hath sent me"—after the day of vengeance, the day of national judgments—" to comfort all that mourn, to give unto them that mourn in Zion, beauty for ashes," lxi. 2, 4. The ultimate removal of Divine judgment from the nation, which is implied in the previous verse, is then clearly announced (16). The language expresses very lengthened correction, and most naturally includes that season of judicial trouble of which 1800 years have elapsed without bringing it to a close. Weighed down by judgment as Israel has been, the heart of the nation has never been wholly crushed ; a brighter day has always been anticipated ; the spirit has not failed and will not fail ; to that point it has not been the Divine purpose to carry judgment. The same idea is introduced in other places : " Who is a God like unto thee, that par-

doneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob," Micah vii. 18-20; "Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations? wilt thou not revive us again?" Ps. lxxxv. 5, 6.

17-19. *For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly (or, turning away) in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him, and to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord; and I will heal him.*

The cause of such continued, although not perpetual wrath, is said to be the covetousness of the nation, a phase of Israel's character which has long been proverbial, and which their banishment and reproach for nearly 2000 years have not sufficed to eradicate. Their sufferings are often traced to the same origin, see ii. 7. By this festering sore was the whole body of the nation disfigured: from the least of them unto the greatest of them, every one is given to covetousness, Jer. vi. 13. For this reason did the Lord "hide" himself and withdraw his favour, abandoning Israel to the "way of his heart." "Ephraim," he said, "is gone to his idols, let him alone." But a time is promised when the Lord, moved with pity at the spectacle of their erring ways, will heal and comfort Israel (18, 19). He will restore holiness—he will heal first, he will comfort next; righteousness, then peace, is the order in his kingdom. But both will be preceded by repentance. Israel will first be a nation of "mourners:" "They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn and be in bitterness for him."—"The fruit of the lips" (19) is that which the lips produce. The same expression, in Heb. xiii. 5, is interpreted "the



sacrifice of praise." A parallel expression is that in Hos. xiv. 2, "the calves of the lips," in evident allusion to the offering of calves among the Jews. From the connexion in this passage, it may refer, not to the thanksgiving of Israel, but to their confession of sin. This fruit of the Spirit is the workmanship of God, is his creating. Then there will be extended both to Jew and Gentile the most perfect peace. Such appears to be the import of the words "to him that is far off, and to him that is near," as in Eph. ii. 17: "He preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh."—The repetition "peace, peace," indicates, according to the Hebrew idiom, the superlative, or highest degree. This will be accomplished when the Prince of peace shall extend peace to Jerusalem like a mighty river, and shall speak peace unto the heathen.

i 20, 21. *But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.*

The peace which God bestows is the result only of repentance and righteousness; the wicked cannot enjoy it. They are like the ever restless sea.<sup>1</sup> They are ever agitated by passions that are unsubdued and unsatiated; they do not "abstain from fleshly lusts which *war against the soul*;" and they are at the mercy of conscience, which may any moment be roused into angry action, scourging their feelings into agony and frenzy, as the winds lash the waves. There may be reference here to the condition of the guilty nations of the earth at the period pointed to by the context. The ungodly will not stand in the day of national judgment; they will be like the chaff which the wind driveth away; they will call on the mountains to cover them. To such there will be no peace.

<sup>1</sup> "When," in the original, 'ע, for.

## CHAPTER LVIII.

THIS chapter contains a condemnation of the formality and hypocrisy of the Jewish nation in their religious observances ; it teaches that the service which God asked of them consisted in useful action, and not in fruitless profession ; and declares, that would they return to a better mind and practice, they would be revisited with the Divine favour. The period of prosperity referred to in verses 8, 14, is certainly that which yet awaits them when they shall return to the Lord, the terms of the description far exceeding anything that has been experienced by the nation since the days that Isaiah prophesied. According to this view, it is not necessary to limit the previous description of their hypocrisy to any single period ; it may be regarded as representing generally, from the time of the prophet onwards, one flagrant class of those sins which induced and have perpetuated their judgments. This part of the prophecy harmonizes with the character drawn of the nation by our Lord, which in a greater or less degree they appear to have retained to the present hour.

1, 2. *Cry aloud (or, with the throat), spare not ; lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God : they ask of me the ordinances of justice ; they take delight in approaching to God.*

The chapter opens with a stirring call to the prophet to rebuke the sins of Israel boldly and faithfully, with

such severity as the exigency of their circumstances required. It is not with their neglect of religious ordinances that fault is found; on the contrary, in the practice of the letter of these, they are represented as being most exemplary (2). The same testimony is borne in many other places: "I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts," i. 11-15. This testimony is borne by our Lord himself, who applies the language of the prophet to the Jews of his day, Matt. xv. 7, 9. It is not less applicable to them still. The tenacity with which in all ages, and under all circumstances, they have clung to the observance of their national religious rites, forms an interesting feature in their singular history.—The clause "as a nation that did righteousness," indicates the loftiness of the profession made by them. Living guiltily as they did, they were yet beautiful outwardly, as if they had been a holy nation. The clause may also comprehend the idea of their high profession aggravating the guilt of their actual sinfulness.—The clause "they take delight in approaching to God," points to a curious but easily explained mental phenomenon, viz., the circumstance of the unholy taking pleasure in religious services—like Herod, hearing gladly. It is said similarly of Israel: "With their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice," Ezek. xxxiii. 31, 32.<sup>1</sup> They said they were Jews, but were not, and did lie.

3, 4. *Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours (or, things wherewith ye grieve others). Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day (or, ye fast not as this day), to make your voice to be heard on high.*

<sup>1</sup> "Justice." The same word in the original as in a previous clause of the verse, where it is translated "righteousness."

The Jews are represented as expressing their amazement and disappointment at the ill success which attended even their rigorous observance of religious duties. God disregarded their self-mortifications. The reason is added by the prophet; the actions of their life nullified the professions of their lips. Sensuality (finding pleasure) and oppression (exacting all their labours) accompanied their fasting. The clause "ye exact all your labours," seems to denote, that although they ceased on their own part from business, they made no allowance for those employed by them, but exacted rigorously the ordinary amount of work. The outline drawn by the prophet is filled up by the details given in the description of the Jews and their rulers by Christ. Of those of his day he said, "Ye outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." While most strict in their attention to outward religious forms, even to the tithing of mint and anise and cummin, they were "a generation of vipers, an evil and adulterous generation." Not only did they mingle their fasting with sensuality and oppression, and thus nullify it, they are charged also with mingling strife with it (14). Such fasting, it is declared, God did not want. The words "to make your voice to be heard on high," seem to refer to the boisterous and angry character of their service. The whole clause has also been regarded as expressing the futility of their service; their voice would not reach the heavenly throne.

5-7. *Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul (or, to afflict his soul for a day)? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens (or, the bundles of the yoke), and to let the oppressed (or, broken) go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out (or, afflicted) to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?*



A description of such a fast as is pleasing to God is here given, first negatively, and then positively. The description is of course to be viewed in connexion with the cause which gave rise to it. It points out what, in the particular circumstances of the Jews, would be the fast which would indicate true repentance. In the negative part of it (5) their affected humiliation is condemned, and in the positive part (6, 7), the practice of equity, mercy, and love, in place of their heartless tyranny and injustice, is enjoined. What is described as insufficient, is clearly the substitution, by the nation, of the letter for the spirit of fasting—making its end and essence to consist in the assumption of the signs and habiliments of sorrow. The various particulars of ver. 5 are blamed, not as means to an end—so far they were necessary and becoming—but as being made the end itself. In the positive part of the description, the relief of the oppressed and liberality to the poor, particularly to poor relatives, are enjoined. The practice of these virtues is specified as being contrary to the habits of the Jews, and hence the exercise of these fruits meet for, or becoming, repentance, would indicate the sincerity of their humiliation, as the neglect of them indicated its hollowness.

8. *Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily; and thy righteousness shall go before thee: the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward (or, shall gather thee up).*

The good results of repentance thus evidenced to be heartfelt, will be the restored favour of God, and all the blessings covenanted to Israel. The language not only expresses conditional but prophetic blessings: it implies not only that they would experience them did they repent, but that they would repent and experience them. Not having been realized at the return from the captivity in Babylon or since, they must be understood of restored and converted Israel; and in this view they harmonize with other predictions referring to that period. The very

opening of the description implies a degree of blessedness not yet realized. It refers to the dawning of day upon them after their night of degradation is over. But their morning has not yet broken, it is still night with them. The same figure in connexion with the same event is employed in other places: "They that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them has the light shined," ix. 2; "Arise, shine, for thy light is come," lx. 1. Now it is winter with them, the whole body is diseased, the whole head sick, and the whole heart faint; but it is only winter, only disease, not death: the spring of the nation will return, its health will be restored. Then, as is added, it will be distinguished by righteousness—"the people shall be all righteous;" and by the manifestation of the glory of the Lord—"the glory of the Lord shall rise upon it."

9-11. *Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity; and if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon-day: And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought (or, droughts), and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail (or, lie, or, deceive) not.*

The period when the prayers of Israel have been vain oblations will then be over, and they will be answered. This particular is often introduced in connexion with their final prosperity: "The people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem; thou shalt weep no more: the Lord will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee," xxx. 19; "Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear," lxxv. 24.—The expression "putting forth of the finger," is a familiar sign of contempt, and appears to be so used here. The phrase "drawing forth the tongue," lvii. 4, is a parallel expression. The same evidence as before of true repentance is represented in the last part of

ver. 9 and the first part of ver. 10, as being required of Israel, viz., universal benevolence.—The expression “thy darkness shall be as the noon-day,” teaches the height of prosperity to which the nation will be at last exalted. Her salvation will be as a lamp that burneth. The description in ver. 11 is the counterpart of many others which set forth the peace and privileges of the nation under the reign of the Messiah. Then “they shall not hunger nor thirst—he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, by the springs of water shall he guide them,” xlix. 19; “They shall say, This land which was desolate, is become like the garden of the Lord,” Ezek. xxxvi. 35.

12. *And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places : thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations ; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.*

The rebuilding of the cities of Judea will, as here foretold, occupy a prominent place among the events of their return to their own land. The language of this verse, even if detached, cannot with propriety be applied to the return from Babylon. A very similar passage occurs in chap. lxi. 4, which certainly refers to a period yet to come. When the nation shall have become trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord—when they shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, “they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations,” see xliv. 28. Individual expressions in this passage have no natural application to the state of matters after the Babylonish captivity. There is no reason to suppose that in the seventy years’ absence of the Jews the country became a land of *waste* places, the excellence of the climate in that land preserving buildings in a state of perfectness unknown and almost incredible in less genial climes; and still less appropriately could they be called the *old* wastes. It was not until subsequent to the de-

struction of Jerusalem by the Romans that Jerusalem and the other cities generally fell into that desolation in which they still remain. The expression "the foundations of many generations," that is, foundations which have existed for many generations—a description which is scarcely apposite as the case stood after the return from Babylon—will at the last return of Israel be singularly applicable. The foundations of many of the ancient cities of Judea still remain, and already they are those of many generations. The clause "of paths to dwell in," is rendered by Lowth, "of paths to be frequented by inhabitants."

13, 14. *If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day ; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable ; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words : then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord ; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father : for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.*

Another condition of the final prosperity of Israel is their sacred observance of the Sabbath. This consists positively in regarding and employing it as the Lord's day—"my day," and as a holy day, "my holy day," the holy of the Lord ; and this not in a superstitious and heartless manner, but with a spiritual perception and experience of its blessedness, as a "delight:" and negatively, in not regarding and employing it as man's day, in doing their own ways. The peculiar figure "turn away the foot," appears to be taken from the circumstance of a traveller coming in the course of his journey to a place which he is prohibited from crossing—from which he has to turn away the foot. The other six days man may use for purposes of this earth : he may, as it were, travel on them, but he is not so to use the seventh ; it is fenced round and shut in by God : when it is reached he must turn away. The claim of God to one-seventh part of man's time is here asserted as explicitly as language could



do it ; and the circumstances in which it is asserted furnish an irresistible argument for the perpetuity of the claim. If the Sabbath was observed in Paradise before sin entered into the world, and if, as is taught by the connexion of this passage, it will be observed under the reign of the Messiah when sin shall have been banished and righteousness restored, the injunction of it on the part of God must be as binding now, and the necessity of it on man's part far greater. How great a boon is the Sabbath to man ; how truly was it made for him, both for his temporal and his spiritual benefit. The continuance to him of this gift of the creation and of Eden was a mitigation of his curse. A pause from his labour at each week's end—a day of variety, of relief, of rest, is secured to the most toil-worn while the earth remains. Unless robbed of his heaven-bestowed right, he can claim one day as his own, in which he can escape for a season the curse of labour, and eat his day's bread without the sweat upon his brow. There were other things made for man on the morning of the creation. There was the day and night, the firmament, the waters, the ground ; and man has no more title to deprive his fellow-man of his heaven-ordained right to Sabbath rest, than he has to deprive him of the light of the sun, or of breathing the air of heaven, or of walking upon that earth which has been given him for his home.—The same connexion between the observance of the Sabbath and the final blessedness of Israel and of the world is taught, lvi. 6, 7. When this change shall be wrought in Israel ; and instead of saying of his service, "Behold, what a weariness is it," they shall "delight themselves in the Lord" (14), they shall resume the distinguished place on the theatre of the world which they once possessed, and which is still their right as the peculiar people of God ; and they shall inherit all the blessings never yet fully realized which were covenanted to their father Jacob. The double change intimated in this chapter—first to

active benevolence towards men, and next to heartfelt delight in God, may be regarded either as referring to two prominent sins among the Jews, the turning from which to the opposite graces would indicate a sincere return to God;—or as referring generally to two common evils, the abandoning of which would in any circumstances indicate real conversion—the exercise of love to men and love to God being in every case the signs of that saving change.—The clause “thou shalt delight thyself in the Lord,” expresses a different idea from that of verse 2, “they delight to know my ways; they take delight in approaching to God.” These expressions refer to the ordinances of religion; in these hypocritical Israel, in her state of alienation from God, is represented as taking pleasure—a common occurrence with that heart which is deceitful above all things—but it is not said there that her delight is *in God*. In the other instance, in her state of reconciliation, it is in God himself, not in his ordinances alone, that she is represented as delighting.—The expression “I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth,” appears to describe the exalted condition which the Jewish nation will then occupy, when God shall get them praise in every land. The same expression is applied to the past glory of Israel, Deut. xxxii. 13; and in Hab. iii. 19, it is applied to their yet future glory, as appears from the preceding context which describes the preparatory judgments of the Lord on the nations of the earth. A similar expression is employed in the same circumstances in Ps. xviii. 33: “God setteth me upon my high places.” That psalm is to be understood of the Jewish nation, the seed of David, as is seen from the last verse, and from its general resemblance to the other songs of triumph which restored and converted Israel shall take up.

## CHAPTER LIX.

IN this chapter there is first described the cause of Israel's troubles, viz., not the want of will or power on the part of God to deliver them, but their own wickedness, 1, 2. This is followed by an account of the various particulars of their guilt, 3-8 ; then their repentance is represented prophetically, 9-15, together with the final judgments of the nations of the earth, 16-18, and the reign of Christ in Zion over all flesh, 19-21.

1, 2. *Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save ; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear : but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid (or, have made him hide) his face from you, that he will not hear.*

In the previous chapter the nation is represented as complaining of the futility of their observance of religious duties, "Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not ?" The answer is, that these are not accompanied by separation from sin ; and here the same subject is enlarged on, and their misfortunes are attributed to their own iniquities. The first verse may perhaps be understood as implying that it was the complaint and charge of the Jews that the Lord's hand was shortened—that they falsely ascribed their calamities to him, while they overlooked the real cause, which, it is added (2), was their own iniquities. The hand is in Scripture the common symbol of strength ; to shorten it is to weaken. God could save from their calamities, but would not on account of their sins. These had become like a wall separating between

him and them ; like a cloud coming between them and his face or favour,

“ As a cloud along the sky  
Which will not let the sunbeams through, nor yet  
Dissolve in rain and end, but spreads itself  
’Twixt heaven and earth.”

3-8. *For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity ; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness. None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth : they trust in vanity, and speak lies ; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity. They hatch cockatrice’ (or, adders’) eggs, and weave the spider’s web : he that eateth of their eggs dieth, and that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper (or, that which is sprinkled, is as if there brake out a viper). Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works : their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands. Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood : their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity ; wasting and destruction (or, breaking) are in their paths. The way of peace they know not ; and there is no judgment (or, right) in their goings : they have made them crooked paths ; whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace.*

In these verses their troubles are traced to their true source. They contain an enumeration of various sins with which Israel was chargeable. In the previous chapter it is their hypocrisy which is reproved ; here the reproof is a general one, applying to a number of their more prominent violations of the divine law. The whole description taken together is a paraphrase of that summary of their character given in ix. 17 : “ Every one is a hypocrite and an evil-doer.” The same order—hypocrisy first, general depravity next—is often observed, as in i. 10-15 ; Hos. vi. 6-10 ; Micah vi. 6-12. The national sins enumerated here are laid to their charge in many similar descriptions. Hos. iv. 1, 2 ; Rom. iii. 13-17. In this passage they are charged with being murderers, liars, unjust, with evil intentions against others, and evil doings, with malice, oppression, strife. In the course of the description, in order to show how thorough was their devotedness to evil, the various members of the body, their hands, their



fingers, their lips, their tongue, their feet, and even their thoughts, are represented as engaged in the service of iniquity. The expression "they hatch cockatrice' eggs" (5), implies that their purposes against each other were mischievous and dangerous as serpents are; and that they nurtured these carefully until put in execution, as the serpent sits upon its eggs. Which of the serpent tribe is intended in the original is uncertain. The purposes of Israel are represented by a continuance of the same figure as of the most deadly character: "He that eateth of their eggs dieth," that is, he that falleth into their snares is cut off. "That which is crushed breaketh out into a viper," that is, if one is crushed, a viper breaketh forth. If their plans be examined their dangerous character is seen. The figure appears to be a familiar one in the East, according to the testimony of Roberts, quoted by Barnes. In reference to India, he writes, "It is said of the plans of a decidedly wicked and talented man, 'That wretch! he hatches serpents' eggs.' 'Beware of the fellow, his eggs are nearly hatched.' 'Ah! my friend, touch not that affair, meddle not with that matter; there is a serpent in the shell.' 'I touch it! No, no. The last time I did so the shell broke, and a young serpent gave me a bite, which has poisoned my whole frame.'"—The expression "they weave the spider's web," seems, from the following verse (6), to denote the utter deficiency of their works. These were no more acceptable to God than a web is a suitable garment. Such was the value of their self-righteousness. It would form no covering from God's wrath. The zeal for sin which is indicated by all the members of the body being described as engaged in iniquity, is further expressed by their being said to run—to haste—to evil (7), as in the zeal of David in God's service he says, "I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments." There is no necessity for limiting the preceding description of the sins of the Jewish people to any par-

ticular period. They are represented as the cause of the judgments under which they still groan ; and the description is applicable to many periods of their history after they forsook the service of the true God. Great part of it is adapted by Paul to the state of the nation in his day, Rom. ii. 13-17. The present sins of a nation are not necessarily to be regarded as the cause of present punishment ; the long-suffering of God is in this sense salvation. He delays the infliction of deserved correction : the judgment may be long subsequent to its cause, if the cause remains. This appears from the history of the nations of Canaan, of the Babylonians, of the Assyrians (Nineveh), &c. The case of the Amalekites furnishes a striking illustration of this. Of them it was said unto Moses, "Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua ; for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." But it was not until upwards of 400 years after, that their judgment for their sin came ; and thus what looks severity on the part of God in the command to "slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass," is in reality one of the most remarkable illustrations of his long-suffering. Compare Ex. xvii. 8-14, and 1 Samuel xv. It is not thus necessary, giving a future application to the latter part of this chapter, that the present character of the Jewish nation should correspond to the letter with the description of their sin. It applies to an earlier date. Their guilt of old was the cause of judgment inflicted since, and, like the cause, still prolonged.

9-11. *Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us : we wait for light, but behold obscurity ; for brightness, but we walk in darkness. We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes : we stumble at noon-day as in the night ; we are in desolate places as dead men. We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves : we look for judgment, but there is none ; for salvation, but it is far off from us.*

The final repentance of Israel is next described (9-15).

The conjunction "therefore" implies that they will confess that their sins are the cause of the removal of the divine favour. The time will then have arrived when they will comply with the invitation, "only acknowledge thine iniquity." The expressions "judgment" and "justice" refer to the interposition of God in their behalf. For their sin his interference is still withheld, and deliverance from their calamities denied. In all ages they have cherished the expectation of this;—they are called "prisoners of hope,"—but they still wait in vain; they still walk in darkness. The indulgence and disappointment of this hope are often alluded to: "We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and behold trouble," Jer. viii. 15; "Hast thou utterly rejected Judah? hath thy soul loathed Zion? why hast thou smitten us, and there is no healing for us? we looked for peace, and there is no good; and for the time of healing, and behold trouble," xiv. 19. Their condition is compared (10) to that of a blind man guiding himself by a wall and stumbling at noon-day. The comparison is peculiarly suited to their circumstances under the Christian dispensation. Amid the flood of spiritual light shed on this world by the gospel, those for whose benefit it was specially intended, and to whom it first came, grope in darkness. Man, by nature, is not only in darkness, but also blind; and the opening of the blind eye, as well as the shining of light upon the head, is necessary in order to spiritual vision, and that Israel has not yet received. Their eyes are yet blinded that they do not see.<sup>1</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> There is a difference of opinion in regard to the meaning of the clause "we are in desolate places," from the uncertain derivation of the original. The noun מְשֻׁמָּה may be derived either from שָׂם, to be laid waste, or from שָׂם, to be fat. Hence it may be translated either "desolate places," or "fertile places." By the former interpretation intensity is given to the description by the double allusion to desolation and to death; by the other there is presented a contrast between their condition and the prosperity of others.

grief of their repentance at last is represented (11) by the melancholy cry of the bear when caged, and by the cooing of the dove when deprived of its mate. The former has been understood also of the angry growl of the bear when desiring food, expressive of murmuring; but this view is less suitable than the other to the context. The latter, which is a natural symbol of grief, occurs also in xxxviii. 14, and in Ezek. vii. 16. The word "judgment" bears the same signification as in verse 9. Barnes translates, "vindication."

12-15. *For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions are with us; and as for our iniquities, we know them; in transgressing and lying against the Lord, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood. And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey (or, is accounted mad): and the Lord saw it, and it pleased him that there was no judgment (or, it was evil in his eyes).*

The acknowledging of iniquity, which is the contrary of covering or hiding it, is here described. Israel is represented as confessing their guilt as known to God (first clause), and also as manifest to themselves (second clause). This is followed (13) by an unqualified and undisguised confession of their sins both against God and their fellow-men, in their lives, in their speech, and in their thoughts, which is made in language indicative of true repentance. To express still farther the extent of their national depravity, Justice is very beautifully represented (14) as turned away backward and standing aloof from the land, deterred from approaching by the enormity of its wickedness. "Judgment" is here equivalent to justice. In the expression "truth has fallen in the street," there appears allusion to the ancient custom of administering justice in "the place of concourse" at the gates of the city, where the street appears to have been left wide on purpose.



This and the other expression "truth faileth," imply the absence of truth in their courts or places of justice—a state of matters expressive of utter degeneracy and corruption. A further characteristic of the reign of sin in the land is, that every one who departed from evil, who refused to conform to the guilty practices of the multitude, became thereby exposed to spoliation and ruin.<sup>1</sup> The confession put into the lips of Israel seems to extend only to the close of verse 13. The same subject is continued in the two following verses, but not—at least not in the last of them—as the confession of the nation, but as the description of the prophet. Seeing in vision their acknowledgment of their guilt, he takes up the subject, and enlarges upon it.

16-18. *And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor : therefore his arm brought salvation unto him ; and his righteousness, it sustained him. For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head ; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak. According to their deeds (or, recompences), accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompence to his enemies ; to the islands he will repay recompence.*

The Almighty is here represented as putting an end to the state of matters described before, at which he is displeased. The coincidence of the language with the frequent descriptions of his judgments on the earth previous to the establishment of his kingdom, points out the period of which it is to be understood ; and this is determined still more conclusively by what follows, which represents the establishment of that kingdom. Parallel texts occur in Deut. xxxii. 35-43 ; Is. ix. 7 ; xlix. 25, 26 ; lxiii. 3-6 ; lxvi. 15, 16. The Lord is represented as amazed that among the sons of Israel she could find none to intercede for her, all being alike corrupted. The language

<sup>1</sup> "Maketh himself a prey," or is plundered, from שָׁלַל, to draw out, plunder.

must be understood as expressing very strongly the utter depravity of the nation. That this is the scope of the passage appears from parallel texts. It is said similarly, "I beheld, and there was no man; even among them, and there was no counsellor, that, when I asked of them, could answer a word. Behold, they are all vanity; their works are nothing," xli. 28, 29; "Our iniquities, like the wind, have carried us away; and there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee," lxiv. 7. When the case of the Jewish nation is thus become desperate, the Lord arises, like a man of war, to judge his enemies, and, through this instrumentality, to bring salvation finally to Jew and Gentile. That it will be the Lord's work is often declared in other portions of Scripture: "I looked, and there was none to help;—mine own arm brought salvation to me; and my fury, it upheld me," lxiii. 5; "O sing unto the Lord a new song, for he hath done marvellous things; his right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory," Ps. xcvi. 1. His righteousness denotes here his rectitude in the punishment of the ungodly nations of the earth. He is represented as a warrior (17), but with this peculiarity, that while he wars, he wars, it is repeated, righteously. His armour consists not of vengeance and zeal alone, but also of righteousness and salvation: "In righteousness he doth judge and make war," see i. 27. This description of Christ does not answer to the character in which he appeared on earth. It will not, however, be the first time in which he has assumed such a character. He did so, for example, although on a smaller scale, at the destruction of Jerusalem.—Another feature of the judgments of that day to which none is like, will be, that it will be a day of recompenses (18). This language is applied to the destruction of the nations which shall be gathered against Jerusalem. It will be in proportion to the degree in which they may have afflicted Israel that

they will be judged, in "the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion," xxxiv. 8. But here the expression appears to refer generally to the judgments which will be enacted then. Nations will be dealt with as they have dealt with God.—Allusions to "the islands" in connexion with events yet to come occur frequently, see xi. 11. Maritime countries appear to be denoted by the expression, but which is not determined. Israel is to be recovered at last from the islands of the sea, xli. 4; they are called on as particularly concerned in the final restoration of Israel, xli. 1; and to them the knowledge of the Lord is at last to extend, li. 5.

19-21. *So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun: when the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him (or, put him to flight). And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord. As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.*

The effect of the national judgments to be wrought on the great and terrible day of the Lord will be the fear of God by all flesh, and the reign of Christ in Zion. The same connexion of judgment and the conversion of the nations is observed in other places; as in Zeph. iii. 8, 9. The second clause of verse 19 expresses briefly the substance of the three previous verses. When the guilty nations of the earth shall have gathered in great force against Jerusalem, the Lord, through some instrumentality, will meet them, and put them down (margin): "I will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them for my people and for my heritage Israel," Joel iii. 2. There is much ambiguity in the original of this clause. A rendering, different from that of

the authorized version, is generally adopted by expositors. Lowth translates, "When he (Jehovah) shall come like a river straitened in his course, which a strong wind driveth along." By this translation of the Hebrew, the Lord, previously described as a warrior, is represented as hurrying on to punish his enemies with the resistless impetuosity of a swollen and pent-up river urged on by a strong wind. The comparison is a very beautiful one, and is quite in harmony with what is then ascribed to Christ, in the day when even his wrath shall be kindled, and the Lamb shall be angry. The common translation is, however, tenable, and both agree equally with the scope of Scripture. Another event in those days is the presence of the Redeemer in Zion; see ii. 2. That will be when the judgments of Israel shall be over, and their enemies subdued, and the fear of the Lord upon all flesh. The apostle Paul applies the verse, which he quotes with some variations, to the occasion of the final conversion of the Jews, and the application of this one determines the meaning of all similar passages: "And so all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob," Rom. xi. 26. The import of the original and of the quotation is similar. It amounts to the same thing whether it be said that Christ comes to Zion to deliver, or that the deliverer appears from that quarter. Both agree on the direction from which salvation is to come to Judea and to the world. But while the fact of some manifestation of Christ's presence in Zion is made clear, the manner of it is left as much in the dark. This is among the secret things that belong unto the Lord. Then Jacob, or Israel, shall have turned from transgression, when "the Lord shall reign in mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously." The promise of the Lord to them then is, that by his Spirit and his word, he will reign over them in righteousness for ever, that is, while the



dispensation of righteousness shall endure (21). His Spirit, then poured upon the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, will continue with them, keeping them faithful to him who will then be in reality, as well as by title, the King of the Jews. It is of this period of their history that it is similarly said, "I will make a covenant of peace with them, it shall be an everlasting covenant with them, and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore," Ezek. xxxvii. 26.

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## CHAPTER LX.

THE same party is addressed here as in the preceding chapter, viz., Israel, and the same subject continued, viz., the blissful condition of the nation when restored and converted, and that not in their character as a Church, but as a nation. Many circumstances justify this opinion, in place of the popular one, that the whole description refers to the Church of Christ, to the exclusion absolutely, or at least nationally, of the Jewish people. The connexion with the close of the previous chapter, of which Zion and Jacob are the subjects; the contrast which is maintained between the party addressed and the Gentiles; the allusions, as the description proceeds, to wastes, desolations, cities; and the coincidence between the whole and other scriptural predictions of Israel's final prosperity—all demand a literal exposition of the passage. The description is one of the most beautiful in Isaiah, where there is so much that is beautiful. Its sublimity is of the very highest order, and it is equalled by its chasteness. Its style is in keeping with, and worthy of, the exalted theme which is the subject. Its fervour and enthusiasm are infecting,

extending to, and enkindling with their own fire, the breast of the reader. The prophet throws his whole soul into his subject, and he engages the hearts also of all who read it. He represents himself as an eye-witness of the events predicted, and he writes with all the fire and life of one before whose eyes the scene has passed. So vividly is the gorgeous picture drawn that the eye seems to gaze upon the glorious reality.

The chapter contains a declaration of Israel's final glory, and a description of the honour which will then be paid to her by the kingdoms of the earth, and of the blissful condition of the nation under the reign of the Messiah.

1, 2. *Arise, shine (or, be enlightened) ; for thy light is come (or, cometh), and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people : but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.*

As the call to sit in the dust—to sit upon the ground, is a call to submit to judgment, so the call to arise indicates the return of prosperity. The expression “thy light is come,” implies the same, indicating that the dark night in Israel's history will then be over, and that her bright day will then have dawned. Or the word may be taken in its common New Testament sense of spiritual light—in the sense in which all believers are children of light. It is of that period, and of that nation, that it is said in Malachi iv. 1, 2, “Behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven . . . but unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise.” Not only is there foretold a time of prosperity generally, but the honour of the glory of the Lord rising upon her. Here the expression “glory” may refer to the manifestation of the Divine presence and protection, whatever its character, which will then be vouchsafed to the nation. Or it may be but a repetition of the idea expressed by the term light, the whole being thus a prediction of the conversion of Israel. The holi-

ness of the living soul is the holiness of God—that which forms his glory ; he is “glorious in holiness.” What may be said to be true of every believer, that the glory of God has risen upon him, and is seen upon, is foretold of Israel nationally. And how clearly will the glorious perfections of the Almighty be seen, when it is not an individual believer, but a whole nation, which reflects them. This view is confirmed by the contrast which is drawn between the condition of Israel and that of the Gentile world. Theirs, at the period of Israel’s conversion, is said to be a state of gross darkness, that is, spiritual darkness. This gives a totally different view of the manner of the world’s conversion from what is generally entertained ; see xxv. 7. Other texts in addition to those enumerated there, teach or imply the same fact : “There shall come in the last days scoffers,” (agreeing with the other description in the psalms, “The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God,”) “walking after their own lusts.” With this view agrees what is stated by our Lord, when he says, “To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I might bear witness unto the truth,” John xviii. 27. And again, “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations ; and then shall the end come,” Matt. xxiv. 14. Here it is not taught that at his first coming Christ or his word were to be for the conversion of all the world, but merely that they were to be witnesses in it for the truth. The cleansing of the world by judgment, where goodness will have failed, will be nothing new in its history. It will be a repetition of the event of Noah’s days, only that fire, not water, will be the element employed by the Almighty. The flood speedily effected what many years of longsuffering had not done.

3. *And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.*

Here it is foretold that Israel, when restored to the

favour and blessing of God, will attract universal attention. As the bright dawning of the sun arrests the eye, so will the favoured condition of Israel, when the glory of the Lord shall be seen upon her, excite the notice and the interest of the Gentiles, and they shall go to witness and to participate in her blessings. The same thing is frequently declared. It is then that "many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord." It will be no common light which will thus attract the whole world. Israel's will be a bright rising. So it is said that "her righteousness will go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth," lxii. 1. If of one Jew it was said that he was "a burning and a shining light," how bright will be the light of a converted people!

4. *Lift up thine eyes round about, and see; all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side.*

In this verse Israel is directed to contemplate the spectacle of her sons' and daughters' return from all the lands whither they have been scattered. This must refer to the second return of the nation; the return of the remnant that shall be left after the first return, or their national repossession of Judea, see xi. 11. Part of the nation are in the land before the event of this verse occurs—it is there that the glory of the Lord shall arise upon them. Now the remainder shall return, and the whole nation be assembled. The same form of address, referring to the same event, is used in other places: "Lift up thine eyes round about and behold, all these gather themselves together and come to thee," xlix. 18. The expression "sons and daughters," is to be understood not of Gentile converts but of Jews, this being its meaning, where it occurs in similar passages, ch. xliii. 6; xlix. 22. The clause "shall be nursed<sup>1</sup> at thy side," is supposed

<sup>1</sup> From נָשָׂא, which signifies not only to nurse, but also to bear, carry,



to refer to an eastern custom of carrying children upon the hip, with their arms around the side, lxvi. 12.

5-7. *Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee (or, noise of the sea shall be turned toward thee), the forces (or, wealth) of the Gentiles shall come unto thee. The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of the Lord. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee: they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory.*

The following verses (5-17) describe the honour that will be paid to Israel, by the gifts heaped upon her by Gentile nations. However singular and improbable the literal understanding of the passage may appear, it will not be the first time that she will have sucked the milk of the Gentiles. Of her deliverance from Egypt it is said, that "the children of Israel borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and the Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them, and the people spoiled the Egyptians," Ex. xii. 35, 36. Similarly of her deliverance from Babylon, it is written that Cyrus commanded,— "Whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the free-will offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem." And of those who went up to Jerusalem it is added, "All they that were about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, beside all that was willingly offered," Ezra i. 4-6. Verse 5 describes the joyful trepidation with which Israel will witness the vast accession of wealth and

Num. xi. 12. "At" is in the Heb. *לְךָ*, upon. The translation then is, "shall be carried upon thy side."

numbers which will then be made to her. The effect of Israel's prosperity upon the nations of the earth will in the first instance be very different. It (Israel) shall be unto me a praise and an honour before all the nations of the earth, and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I do unto it," Jer. xxxiii. 9. The expression "shall flow together,"<sup>1</sup> appears here to have the signification of overflowing with joy. "The abundance of the sea" may refer either to the multitude of the people, or the amount of wealth from the sea, or, as expressed otherwise, from the islands or maritime countries that shall be converted, that is, turned, or that shall flow to Judea. In addition to their offerings, much of the substance<sup>2</sup> of Gentiles at large will be placed at the disposal of the favoured people of God. "Ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles," it is similarly said, "and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves," lxi. 6. Some of the localities are then specified (6, 7), which will contribute to the honour and wealth of Israel. "The multitude of camels," is expressed still more strongly in the original, which signifies "an inundation of camels." The significancy of the expression is understood by those who have witnessed the immense herds of those animals which are reared in the East, and which form a common and large item of property, and an index of wealth. Midian was the father of the Midianites, and Ephah was his eldest son. That race was distinguished at an early period by their commercial enterprise, Gen. xxxvii. 28, the prosecution of which would be carried on in a great degree by camels, of which they were possessed of great numbers, Judges vi. 5. Their country appears to have extended from the north extremity of the Red Sea to the

<sup>1</sup> From נָהַר, to flow, used metaphorically of nations.

<sup>2</sup> "The forces," from כֹּחַ, signifying power, a military force, substance, or riches, Gen. xxxiv. 29, as in the margin. It appears to bear this signification here from the enumeration of what follows.

region of Moab. Sheba, whose queen came to visit Solomon, was famed as a commercial country, Ezek. xxvii. 22. It is represented as a place of great wealth, 1 Kings x. 2. Elsewhere Sheba is named as bringing of her wealth to the service of Christ when he shall reign on earth: "The kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.... He shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba," Ps. lxxii. 10-15. It is supposed to have been in Abyssinia. Kedar was the head of a wandering tribe in Arabia. Nebaioth was another of the sons of Ishmael, and also the head of an Arab tribe. While from the mercantile regions first enumerated, camels, gold, and frankincense, are described as being brought, sheep and rams are represented as the fitting offering of the pastoral Arab tribes. The districts specified represent the Gentile world generally. Both the isles or maritime regions to the west, and the regions in or towards Arabia on the east, are said to minister of their substance to Israel. The fact of such offerings being then presented to the Lord, or to Israel, on whom his glory shall then appear, is often declared. What is bestowed on Israel is said to come up with acceptance on God's altar. This may be understood as implying that the offerings made to them will be pleasing to him as the sacrifice was of old,—what is done to the least of his disciples he counting done unto himself; or that having been gifted to Israel, they will be laid on his altar. According to the former of these views, there is nothing in the passage to encourage the idea of a restored temple-service. The last clause of the verse, however, countenances that idea. In a passage which refers to the contributions by the Gentiles of their substance at last, it is said, "I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory" And it is added as a truth which will then be illustrated by the gifts of the Gentiles; "The silver is mine and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. The glory of this

latter house shall be greater than of the former," Hag. ii. 7, 8.

8. *Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?*

This verse describes the return of the remnant of Israel by the comparison of a cloud and of a flight of doves. These may denote either the numbers of Israel, or the rapidity of their return, or both may be combined. A cloud is a scriptural symbol of numbers,—“so great a cloud of witnesses,”—and a cloud driven rapidly before the wind is a natural symbol of speed. Doves also, from their multitude in the East, and from the celerity of their flight on their return in the evening to their dove-cots to their young, from every quarter of the surrounding country over which they have scattered themselves, symbolize the same things. Probably, however, the figure is here a single one, in allusion to the fact that in the East, as in some other countries, the flights of doves are often on so great a scale as to extend as far as the eye can reach, obscuring the sun and literally forming a cloud. The suddenness of Israel's final return is repeatedly foretold,—“Shall a nation be born in one day?” Such an end to their dispersion over the world could occasion no surprise in times like the present, when the overthrow of monarchies and the remoulding of nations were recently matters of almost daily occurrence, and the work of a few hours.

9, 10. *Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee. And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee; for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee.*

The assistance which will be given by other nations in forwarding the return of Israel, and in re-establishing them in their own land, is here foretold. The expressions,



“ isles,” and “ ships of Tarshish,” as in other places, appear to denote maritime countries, and the ships of such. Compare Gen. x. 5. These are said to wait first, that is, to be the most active in furthering the return and prosperity of the nation. What will induce other nations to act so will be the distinguished favour shown by God to Israel—he will have glorified her. So it is said, “ nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee, because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel ; for he hath glorified thee,” lv. 5. The singular circumstance of the most despised of nations becoming the most honoured, is often predicted in language very similar to the text ; “ The Lord will yet choose Israel—and the people shall take them and bring them to their place, and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the Lord for servants and for handmaids,” xiv. 1 ; “ They shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord out of all nations, upon horses and in chariots, to my holy mountain Jerusalem,” lxvi. 20. The removal with them, to their own land, of their silver and gold, is particularly noticed. The vast wealth of that nation, and the extent to which they are the creditors of European kingdoms, is well known. They are in a manner the bankers of the world ; and the effects that would follow from the withdrawal of their wealth from different countries, is not merely a curious but an important question. The good service that will be rendered to them by Gentiles, as it is described in the 10th verse, is foretold in other places : “ Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vine-dressers,” lxi. 5. It may even be said that the work of ministering to Israel by kings is already on a small scale begun. The monarchs of England and Prussia have erected a Protestant church in Jerusalem, and the recent presence of consuls there from different kingdoms, is a circumstance calculated to give a position to the city in the eyes of the

world, and to assist its prosperity, more than any event in its history for many years. And if it may be said that the sons of strangers are to some extent already building up her walls, how easily may the prediction receive its full accomplishment. The clause "in my wrath I smote thee," corresponds with the song sung by Israel at last, "thou hast been angry with me, but thine anger is turned away." In reference also to their yet coming prosperity, it is similarly said, "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee," liv. 7. There is a contrast between the wrath which now rests on Israel and the favour which yet awaits her, and if the former has been so terrible, how excellent will be the latter. "Thy walls" and "thy gates" (11), may be understood of Jerusalem, in which case it is to be regarded as the symbol of the whole nation: or rather the words are to be understood of the cities of the land generally now in ruins, but which will then be rebuilt.

11, 12. *Therefore thy gates shall be open continually ; they shall not be shut day nor night ; that men may bring unto thee the forces (or, wealth) of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish ; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.*

The "gates open continually," denote here the constant and large influx of strangers with their offerings, as is described in the previous and following verses. So similarly it is said in Rev. xxi. 24, 25, "The kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour unto it, and the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day." Some expressions in the description in the Revelation of John, of which these words form a part, may lead to hesitation in applying the language of John to the same period, however synonymous that language may be. But even although the passage in Revelation be understood, not of a period more remote—for while the saints on earth live righteously, the risen saints in glory reign spiritually—but of a condi-

tion more spiritual, and in the common meaning of the word, more heavenly, than that indicated by Isaiah, the doing so does not affect the application of his prophecy to the literal Israel. That application of it rests on a foundation of its own, which no use of the literal language of the prophet in the symbolical predictions of the evangelist will shake. If the two prophecies—the literal and the symbolical—be understood as referring to different conditions of the saints, it is not at all unnatural that the language of the one should be borrowed in the description of the other. Much of the one description will apply to the other; there will be the same righteousness, the same peace in both.—Even the rich<sup>1</sup> and the honourable will then come to do honour to Israel and to the God of Israel. This statement is made four times in the course of the chapter, verses 3, 10, 11, 16. It is then that kings shall be the nursing fathers and queens the nursing mothers of the nation. The reason, or at least one reason, why Israel will then receive honour at the hands of kings, will be that policy and expediency will dictate the adoption of this course, so marked will be the divine interference on her behalf, and in behalf of all who befriend her. Every opposing nation will perish (12). Not only will all her past enemies, up to the time of the return to her of the divine favour, be confounded and be destroyed, xli. 11, 12, but should any persevere in their hostility then they will share the same fate; “Whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake,” liv. 15. The oppressors of the nation in past ages have all perished, and in their fate those which still or shall yet oppress them may see the emblem of their own.

13. *The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir-tree, the pine-tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious.*

<sup>1</sup> For the meaning of “forces,” see verse 5, note.

If this verse is understood in the same literal sense in which the context must be understood, it teaches the restoration of the temple at Jerusalem. Such an event would not be without its lesson, and would be in keeping with that system of recompences which will then be carried out against the nations by whose oppressions Israel has been humbled, and which are to be judged in proportion as they have judged her. There would appear something wanting in the complete ascendancy of the favoured people of God, if the profanation of the holy hill by a Mahometan temple were not signally marked by the rebuilding there of the temple of God. As the utter degradation of Israel is most strikingly marked by the Mosque of Omar occupying the site of the Jewish temple, so the utter degradation of Israel's enemies would be signified by the restoration there of the Jewish temple—by the cross taking the place of the crescent. At present, in the pictorial view given of Jerusalem, with the magnificent Mosque of Omar presenting itself to the spectator, it appears to offer anything but a picture of a city given to desolation, anything but an illustration of the prophecy, "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles;" but the circumstance that the object which arrests the eye, and overtops and gives grandeur to the whole, is a heathen temple, shows on reflection how complete has been the humiliation of the city. With a restored temple of God the great object in the picture, the impression made by it would be all the other way; would be eminently illustrative of Israel's glory. The meaning of the words "the glory of Lebanon," is pointed out by the reference to its trees which follows, for the beauty and value of which it was distinguished. It may refer to the trees enumerated, or to the cedar for which Lebanon was peculiarly celebrated. These trees are not now found there, but it is foretold that they will yet be so, xli. 19. The object of their being brought is to beautify the place



of God's sanctuary—to rebuild and adorn the temple. The expression “I will make the place of my feet glorious,” is interesting from its being one of the few passages which are supposed to imply the personal appearance of Christ when he establishes his kingdom on earth. This passage alone would not, however, necessarily teach this. The earth is called his footstool, and so is the temple, Ps. cxxxii. 7; and Jerusalem, where his glory shall be seen, may similarly and peculiarly be called the place of his feet, and be here regarded as synonymous with the place of his sanctuary. The other passages which are chiefly urged as prophetic of his personal appearing are: “They shall look on me whom they have pierced,” Zech. xii. 10; “His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives,” Zech. xiv. 4. The literality with which the remainder of this last passage will be accomplished, see xxxiii. 21, appears to justify the literal exposition of the whole. But this does not require these expressions to be understood of the body of flesh and blood in which the Saviour appeared when on earth, and which it was necessary that he should assume before he could suffer. He has now assumed the glorified body of his humanity. An end was to be answered by his veiling himself in a form of flesh; but that purpose has been served, and what object would be answered by his reassuming in the season of his glory on earth, the habiliment of his humiliation? The common term used for expressing his presence on earth at last is the word “glory;” but whether that of the glorified body, as when he appeared on the mount of transfiguration, or a glory resembling that in which he was present with Israel, only on a scale suited to his circumstances, and those of the Church and the world then, or any other, is left undetermined, unless the passages just quoted are to be understood as determining it of the glorified body; and if the general description of his appearing is to decide the meaning of the occasional one,

“ the place of his feet ” will denote the place where that glory is to be manifested.

14. *The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee ; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet ; and they shall call thee, The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.*

The descendants of the oppressors of Israel, it is here declared, will then pay homage to her. Many nations have in succession possessed the land of Israel ; many more have treated them with inhuman cruelty, and heaped upon them every species of vulgar insult ; and what nation has not despised the Jew ? but the sons of these will yet be suppliants at her feet. Of the Egyptians, and other enemies of the nation, it is similarly foretold : “ In chains shall they come over, and they shall fall down unto thee : they shall make supplication unto thee, saying, Surely God is in thee.” Of kings and queens it is said, “ They shall bow down to thee with their faces towards the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet.” Some approach to this state of matters has been already made. It is not many years since almost royal honours were paid to a distinguished member of the Jewish race by Turkey, a nation signalized by its oppressions of Israel. It is only the other year that another of them was selected by the greatest city of the world as its representative in the British Parliament, in a country which has also placed itself in the list of their oppressors ; and these are but specimens of the altered feelings that are cherished towards the Jew. That people is now in the tideway, taking its place among, and honoured by the proudest nations of the world.

15, 16. *Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breast of kings : and thou shalt know that I the Lord am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob.*

Instead<sup>1</sup> of the desolate and neglected condition in which their land has so long lain, the nation will then be blessed, and be made a blessing to others. The last clause may apply either to the Jews, many generations of whom shall be made sharers of the favour bestowed on the nation—it will not be temporary and short-lived; or to the Gentiles who shall be blessed through Israel. The following verse expresses still more strongly the substance of some previous predictions. The comparison used is very significant of the goodwill which will then be borne to Israel, and of the liberality with which the kings of the earth will then open to her their treasuries. As readily as the mother suckles her babe, will the great and rich give of their wealth for Israel's glory: "Ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles; and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves," lxi. 6. Then, too, the nation will know what they have been so slow to learn, that he whom they have so long rejected is the only Saviour.

17, 18. *For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron: I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders: but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise.*

The final prosperity of Israel is further indicated by the circumstance that, so liberally will Gentile nations pour their wealth into their treasury, the more precious metals will be common and abundant as were the baser metals before. Instead, also, of the oppressive rulers and unjust judges, who are often represented as among the curses of Israel, these will then be peaceful and righteous. Exaction, in the shape of oppressive taxation, arbitrary fining, and other forms, has been one of the most general curses of that people. This, however, is fast disappearing, and will at last be swept away. In fiscal matters they are now very generally being put on a level with other citi-

<sup>1</sup> "Whereas," וְהָיָה, in the place of.

zens. But not only are their rulers in the lands where they are scattered to deal justly by them, they are promised the restoration of righteous rulers of their own: "God will restore her judges as at the first, and her counsellors as at the beginning." War and its bitter results, wasting and destruction will then be unknown: "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all God's holy mountain;" "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." The expression "they shall call thy walls salvation," seems to denote that Israel will then cease to look to and to trust in their walls and gates; that their salvation and the praise which will accompany it will occupy that place in their thoughts and confidence which before was given to walls and gates. The same form of speech occurs, xxvi. 1: "We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks."

19, 20. *The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.*

These verses describe very forcibly the degree to which the divine favour will finally be extended to the nation. The Lord will be to it all that the sun is to the natural world. He is similarly compared to a wall of fire round about them. The manifestation of the divine glory, in whatever way that may be made, will eclipse in interest and in value every natural light; and with God for their light, the day of prosperity which will then dawn upon them will never be interrupted. The whole expresses what is often predicted without the dress of figure, that under the government of God, which will then be set up, and of which Jerusalem will be the centre, a long season of prosperity awaits Israel, the source of which will be



visibly and directly Jehovah. On the coincidence between the language used here and that in Rev. xxi., see verse 11.

21, 22. *Thy people also shall be all righteous : they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation : I the Lord will hasten it in his time.*

The character of the nation will then be in keeping with the greatness of its privileges. Then Jerusalem shall have put on her beautiful garments, and there shall no more come unto her anything that is uncircumcised or unclean. The glory of the whole is claimed by, and will be manifested to be the Lord's. As much as a shoot which is taken and planted owes its existence and position to him who plants it, so will the prosperity of Israel at last be seen to be the Lord's work : "I have created him for my glory ; I have formed him ; yea, I have made him." The expression "the branch of my planting," implies also the security of Israel, for then every plant that the Father hath not planted will be rooted up. That the whole of God's dealings with Israel, like all the other events of his providence and grace, are intended to illustrate and promote his own glory, is often declared. The concluding verse describes the accession of numbers which will then be made to Israel, and the rapidity with which the event of their prosperity will be introduced. It does not appear which numerical increase is here intended ; whether that which will take place by the return of the remnant of the Jews who will remain scattered over the earth after their first or national return ; or that which will occur by the addition or subjection to them of Gentiles. At the period determined by God, when he shall arise and judge for them, their recovery will be rapid. A nation will be born in one day.

## CHAPTER LXI.

THE same subject is still continued, as in previous chapters. The first verses (1-3) foretell the mission of Christ in the twofold character of the messenger of peace, and, when that shall have failed, of the minister of vengeance; and the remainder (4-11), the prosperous condition of the Jewish nation in the time of the Messiah's reign, when the day of vengeance upon them and the other guilty kingdoms of the earth shall have passed away. The chapter has to be understood literally of the Jews, and not figuratively of the Church, for the same reasons as those which precede it. This appears from its references to the literal condition of the land of Judea in the expressions *old wastes, waste cities, &c.*—from there being nothing to indicate to Isaiah and to the Jews that the word *Zion* is not to be understood in its usual signification—from the nation which forms the subject of the chapter being distinguished from the Gentiles, and from the coincidence of the whole with a literal exposition of the rest of Isaiah and of the other prophets. See Preface.

1-3. *The Spirit of the Lord God (or, Adonai Jehovah) is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek: he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called Trees of righteousness, The planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.*

The speaker in the first verses is indubitably the

Messiah. This is determined by the application made by Christ of the first division of the passage to himself in Luke iv. 16-21, and in regard to which he adds, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." It is, however, only part of the passage which he applies to his first coming in the days of his flesh. When he had read from the book of the prophet Esaias onward to the clause inclusive, "to preach the acceptable year of the Lord," he stopped; "He closed the book, and gave it again to the minister, and sat down." What follows, "the day of vengeance of our God," was not at that time fulfilled. He no doubt proclaimed it as he did on other occasions, as in Matt. xxiv. 27. He foretold that it would come, but he did not proclaim it, as in the other case, as having then come. The break in his application of the prophecy clearly shows that it refers to two separate periods, and that while the former part received its accomplishment by his proclaiming the word of salvation when on earth, the other was not then fulfilled,—that it will receive its accomplishment at a future day. That the part which he quoted, and it alone, referred to his coming in the flesh, appears from his adding "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." And the distinction which he draws between what was then, and what remained to be accomplished, determines the application of similar passages. Then began the acceptable year of the Lord; his day of vengeance, however, did not begin then. This refers to the period of his coming again—in whatever manner that may be—when he shall judge among the nations, preparatory to the establishment of his kingdom on earth. The Saviour prefaces his message with a declaration of his having been divinely qualified for the office he had undertaken (1). The expressions, "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me," "the Lord hath anointed me," refer to his consecration beside the waters of the Jordan after his baptism, when in addition to the glimpse of heaven which he

received through the parted clouds, and the voice of the Father which he heard, the Spirit descended upon him like a dove. He had been acquiring step by step under the roof of Joseph for thirty years the human qualifications which he needed, but it was not until the descent upon him of the dove-like Spirit—a fitting symbol both of the message which he carried and of the disposition of the messenger—that he was fully and divinely furnished and equipped for his mediatorial work. His commission, as described in the remainder of the first verse, agrees with the gospel message which he proclaimed when on earth ; it is good tidings to the humble<sup>1</sup> and broken-hearted, whether by convictions of sin or otherwise, and to those who are spiritually the captives and prisoners of sin and Satan. The expression “the acceptable year of the Lord” (2), appears to be borrowed from the Jewish year of jubilee, the year of liberty, which occurred every fiftieth year. It may be understood as embracing the whole period from the day of Christ’s appearing to Israel, downwards to the day of his vengeance, the great and terrible day of the Lord. That period is but as a year in the sight of him with whom a thousand years are but as one day. It was when Christ began his ministry that the scheme of reconciliation from God to man was first fully developed: then the era of God’s offers of salvation peculiarly commenced—that era which has been, and still is, pre-eminently the day of merciful visitation, and which will continue until the number of his elect from among Jew and Gentile has been gathered, and his forbearance with guilty nations exhausted,—when he will exchange the operation of long-suffering for that of power, and will effect by judgment what he has not effected by mercy, viz., the destruction of sin and the establishment of righteousness,—when the year of acceptableness shall be turned into the day of vengeance. While the former period, whose course is now

<sup>1</sup> “The meek,” from עָנָה. In Piel, to oppress, afflict, humble.



running—the period of forbearance and mercy—is as a year; the second, the season of national judgment, will be but as a day. Similarly it is called “the day of the Lord’s vengeance.” The former has continued already for more than 1800 years, and it is not yet expired; the latter will be short. The contest of man with God’s long-suffering may be protracted, but the contest with his power will be speedily terminated. What follows, “to comfort all that mourn,” while of itself applicable to his coming in the flesh, will thus refer to the blessings poured on Israel after their judgments and the judgments of the nations are past. The introduction of Zion—“to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion”<sup>(3)</sup>—points out the class to whom reference is made. That will be a time of mourning with Israel as well as with other kingdoms. Then “two parts thereof shall be cut off and die;” but after these final judgments “they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say it is my people,” Zech. xiii. 9. God will then give them beauty for ashes. The same connexion of events is seen in many other places: “Behold your God will come with vengeance.... then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped,” xxxv. 4, 5; lix. 17-20. In that day shall Israel sing, “Thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me.” Or the mourning alluded to in this verse may be that mourning for sin which will take place when the inhabitants of Jerusalem “shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him;” when “there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem; and the land shall mourn, every family apart,” Zech. xii. 10-14. The conclusion of the verse describes, in language which is almost a repetition of lx. 21, the character of the Jewish nation then, the author of their prosperity, and the object of it. They will be made what they are by the Lord, and for his glory. The expression “trees of righteousness,” appears to signify trees bearing the fruits

of righteousness. The righteous are often represented by trees, Ps. i. 3; xcii. 12. The word in the original translated "trees," is elsewhere translated oaks, i. 29.

*4-6. And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations. And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen, and your vine-dressers. But ye shall be named the Priests of the Lord : men shall call you the Ministers of our God : ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves.*

These verses also repeat, in a great measure, statements of the previous chapter. The first of them predicts as distinctly as any language could, the rebuilding of the yet desolate cities of Judea. It is identical with chapter lviii. 12, which see. In the restoration of their cities, and in other servile work, large aid will be given by Gentiles, who will be their shepherds (5), their husbandmen,<sup>1</sup> and their vine-dressers. The same thing is often foretold, see chapter lx. 10, 14. The language, "Ye shall be named the priests of the Lord," denotes very forcibly the holiness of the nation and their devotedness to the service of the Lord. There may be a connexion between this clause and what precedes. As the priests, by having their temporal wants ministered to by others, were enabled to give themselves wholly to the service of the Lord, so by the ministering of strangers to them will Israel be enabled the better to place themselves at their Lord's disposal. "Ministers" here is another name for priests, Ezek. xlv. 11. The possession by the Jews of the riches of the Gentiles, which is here reasserted, forms the main subject of the previous chapter. The last clause, "In their glory shall ye boast yourselves," signifies, in the possession of what they gloried in, in the wealth of the Gentiles, ye shall boast.

<sup>1</sup> Ploughmen, or husbandmen, as in Amos v. 10.

7. *For your shame ye shall have double; and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess the double; everlasting joy shall be unto them.*

This verse declares, that in proportion to the measure of their judgments will be, in a double measure, that of their blessings: "I will do better unto you than at your beginnings," Ezek. xxxvi. 11; "Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope; even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee," Zech. ix. 12. The subject of the clause, "They shall rejoice in their portion," is the same as of the preceding, viz., the Jews, there being a change of person from the second to the third, a common occurrence in prophecy. Large as has been their portion of shame, larger, double of it, will be their joy; nay, even in a larger measure than this;—for while the duration of their suffering, although so protracted, will yet be in relation to eternity, but very brief; their joy will be everlasting, that is, as it is explained, while the new heavens and the new earth remain.

8, 9. *For I the Lord love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt-offering; and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed.*

The import of the first of these verses appears to be, that although God permitted the oppressions of his people, he yet hated the ways of their oppressors, and, when the measure of their punishment was filled up, would remove his judgments and restore his favour, for he loved judgment (justice), and hated the robbery,<sup>1</sup>—the spoiling of his people, by Gentile nations. "I will direct their work

<sup>1</sup> For burnt-offering, בְּעֹלָה. Critics generally give עֲוֹלָה here, the meaning of עֲוֹלָה, iniquity, injustice, as it is not easy to explain the passage in the other signification. The character of the oppressions of the Jewish nation is very accurately described as a robbery with iniquity, or iniquitous spoiling: or the clause, retaining the common version, may be regarded as

in truth," is literally, "I will give their work<sup>1</sup> (or reward of work) in truth," that is, the prosperity finally intended for them. The everlasting covenant is that of which it is said, "The days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah," &c., Jer. xxxi. 31-33. Here, as in similar cases, the word "everlasting" must be understood as qualified by the duration to which it refers. The fame of restored and converted Israel among the nations of the earth, and the cause of it, are then foretold (9): "I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame," Zeph. iii. 19. One peculiarity in their history is, that wherever they have been scattered their seed has been known among the Gentiles. This universal recognition of them was necessary to their universal degradation. Hitherto it has been as a seed which the Lord hath cursed that they have been known, but then it will be as universally as a seed which he hath blessed.

10. *I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments (or, as a priest), and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.*

Israel is here represented as giving joyful utterance to her gratitude to her deliverer after the days of her mourning are over, and she is again the blessed of the Lord, in a song of praise similar to others which have already occurred, see xii. 1. The burden of her song is neither the removal of her temporal curses nor the possession of temporal honours, but her possession of spiritual blessings,—of the joy of the soul, of the garments of salvation, of the robe of righteousness. The clause, "as a bridegroom

an amplification of the previous clause, God hating peculiarly (Amos v. 21, 24) offerings obtained by robbery.

<sup>1</sup> "Work," עֲמָלָה, an action, a reward of labour.



decketh himself with ornaments," is literally "as a bridegroom decketh himself as a priest with ornaments," (margin,) in apparent allusion to the magnificent dress of the Jewish high-priest, and particularly to his mitre and crown.

11. *For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth ; so the Lord God (or, Adonai Jehovah) will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.*

The final prevalence of righteousness on the earth is here predicted. As surely as the earth, at the return of spring, sends forth its shoots, will righteousness and praise yet arise from it. The same figure is used elsewhere, as in chapter xlv. 8. From the previous and subsequent verses referring to the righteousness of the Jewish nation, that alone may be intended here. It will be before all nations. So bright will be their light that it will attract the attention of the world ; the Gentiles will come to it. As, when the curse of barrenness is removed from the land of Judea, the earth will give forth its increase ; so, when the curse of spiritual barrenness is removed from the hearts of its people, the fruits of righteousness will appear.

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## CHAPTER LXII.

THE same subject is continued and enlarged upon in this chapter, which contains a further development of the glory of Israel at last. Here also no method or particular arrangement of subjects appears to be aimed at, and this is the case generally in the prophecies regarding the events of the last days ; there being frequently abrupt transitions from one incident to another, as if the whole

were ranged in one vast panorama before the view of Isaiah, and his eye glanced from one point to another of the prophetic field. Whatever difficulty this want of arrangement, or rather this accumulation of prophetic events one upon another, may seem to suggest, belongs alike to both views of these prophecies, to the symbolical as well as to the literal. If, as may be supposed, they were rehearsed to Israel, or perused by them, the reiteration of the same events would practically be an advantage, as thus, as in so many sermons, the warnings and encouragements which the book contains would be brought the more frequently before them.

1. *For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.*

Who the speaker is here has been disputed, it having been ascribed to the prophet, to the Jewish people, to the Messiah, and to God. It might naturally enough be understood of the prophet, exclaiming under the impulse of the vision which he contemplated, that, while life remained, he would make the gift of such blessedness to his nation the subject of constant exertion. He would thus appear fulfilling the duty which is devolved (6, 7) upon the watchmen interested in the wellbeing of Israel. But the language seems to imply that the speaker would not cease until the prayer made should be granted; and in this light it can be most satisfactorily understood only of the Messiah. To understand it of any other requires a change of person, which is unnecessary, and of which there is no intimation. It is Christ who is the speaker in the previous chapter, and throughout the remainder of this chapter, as is manifest from such an expression as Hephzi-bah (4), "my delight is in her," which can be understood only of him. The salvation of Israel will in itself be glorious as the brightness of the rising sun, and its effects on the world around will resemble that of the

sun rising bright upon the darkened earth, or of a burning lamp in a dark room. Her state then is often compared to light: "Arise, shine, for thy light is come;" "Gentiles shall see thy light." For this the Redeemer, who showed himself so interested in the salvation of Israel when he was on earth, is represented as pleading.

2, 3. *And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.*

The spectacle of Israel's conversion will attract the notice of the Gentiles—an effect which her sufferings cannot be said to have produced. This is often declared. The clause is almost identical with lx. 3. When the Lord shall arise and have mercy upon Zion, then the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord.—"Thou shalt be called by a new name," may be regarded as explained in verses 4, 12. A new name does not appear to imply anything more definite than what is expressed by "thou shalt be called;" and seems to indicate simply their altered condition. In a kindred passage, i. 26, the words are merely, "Afterwards thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, The faithful city."—Verse 3 describes the attachment borne to the nation by the Lord. The diadem was a chaplet studded with jewels, &c., which, in early times, encircled the heads of monarchs—as is seen from ancient medallions—being used in place of the more modern crown. The same metaphor occurs in Zech. ix. 16. The figure expresses the same thing as is said in verse 5. It is emblematic of the Lord rejoicing over converted Israel.

4, 5. *Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken: neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzi-bah, and thy land Beulah: for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. For as a young man marieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth (or, with the joy of the bridegroom) over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.*

These verses describe the state of matters with Israel when the Lord shall remember the people. The last two expressions, Hephzi-bah and Beulah, should be translated, as well as those rendered "forsaken" and "desolate." As the former have not been applied literally as names, there is no reason to suppose that the latter will either. The one set of expressions describes what Israel has been with the curse of God resting on her, the other what she will be when his favour is restored. The figure of the last clause is very common. The nation has suffered the privations, and been subjected to the ignominy of a wife who is forsaken by her husband; but her joys will yet be those of the wife when reconciled to her husband and restored to his love; even those of a bride in youth, between whom and the bridegroom there is no remembrance of past differences to damp her joy. The same figure occurs, liv. 4-6; Jer. iii. 14; Hos. ii. 19, 20.

6, 7. *I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the Lord (or, are the Lord's remembrancers), keep not silence; and give him no rest (or, silence), till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.*

In these verses the Lord represents himself as having appointed watchmen for Jerusalem, whom he urges to plead continually for her restoration and glory. The watchmen of the first clause are clearly those that make mention of the Lord—who are the Lord's remembrancers (margin) in the second. Those, again, who cause the Lord to be remembered on earth, where, without them, he would be forgotten, are his own children among men. The second clause thus explains the first. The watchmen here, then, are those among his children—those friends of Israel in all ages and churches—who pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Such persons may be called watchmen upon the walls of Jerusalem, as they are ever on the outlook, as it were, for the day of her prosperity.



Whatever singularity there may appear to some in taking up such a position, the prayer of these watchmen is the same as that of the Messiah himself in verse 1. They have, in this matter, the mind that was, and that is, in Christ Jesus. To encourage them to pray alway for Israel's recovery, they have held out to them the assurance of ultimate success. It is not to every prayer that an answer is made sure; the object of prayer may be, is often, at variance with the mind of God. But this one, which is the prayer of Christ until Jerusalem is made a praise in the earth, and to which success is promised, must have power with God, and prevail.

8, 9. *The Lord hath sworn by his right hand and by the arm of his strength, Surely I will no more (or, If I) give thy corn to be meat for thine enemies; and the sons of the stranger shall not drink thy wine, for the which thou hast laboured: but they that have gathered it shall eat it, and praise the Lord; and they that have brought it together shall drink it in the courts of my holiness.*

The Lord is now represented as affirming in the most solemn way, as by an oath, that the nation would yet enjoy the produce of their own land, which strangers have so long devoured. The contrary is introduced as one of their curses. Of the same time it is written, "They shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them; they shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat; mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands," lxv. 21, 22.—By "the courts of my holiness" is meant here Jerusalem, which will then be the holy city. In an earlier period of their history this is mentioned among promised blessings: "Unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose, even unto his habitation shall ye seek; and there shall ye eat before the Lord your God," Deut. xii. 5. And again, "Thou shalt eat before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy wine, of thy corn, and of thine oil," Deut. xiv. 23.

10. *Go through, go through the gates ; prepare ye the way of the people ; cast up, cast up the highway ; gather out the stones ; lift up a standard for the people.*

This verse contains a call to the nations of the earth to prepare a way for the return of Israel to their own land. Very similar language is often used in reference to the same circumstance ; see xl. 3. If this language is to be understood figuratively, how much need is there for such a command. What mountains of ignorance, of unbelief, of prejudice—how many religious and political hinderances have to be removed ! How great a barrier in the way of the reception of the gospel by the Jews is, for example, the common exposition of their prophecies by Christian commentators. Tell a Jew, as these do, that Zion means the Gentile Church—that all the curses are to be interpreted of his nation, but that all the blessings are to be applied to the Christian Church, and what must be his inference ? It must be that when the servants are so hostile to the interests of his nation, the master must be so likewise, and cannot therefore be the promised King of Israel.—It does not appear very clearly to what the clause “go through the gates” refers. It may be understood as a call to Gentile nations to leave their cities, and prepare the way for the return of Israel, or to enter Jerusalem to do so. It has been remarked before that the clause “cast up the highway” may be supposed to contain allusion to that form of highway which in these days is rapidly superseding every other. The description is inapplicable to other forms of road, but most descriptive of this, the railway exemplifying the apparent paradox of a highway without stones. The reference to the lifting up of a standard occurs often in connexion with the final return of Israel ; see v. 26. The precise nature of it must be left in that uncertainty in which Scripture leaves it.

11, 12. *Behold, the Lord hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh : behold,*

*his reward is with him, and his work (or, recompence) before him. And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the Lord: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken.*

The return of the Divine favour to Israel is declared to be a matter proclaimed to all the world. Similar language occurs in xl. 5-10.—“Salvation” is here used for Saviour, as circumcision is for the circumcised. The last verse resembles very much verse 4. It illustrates the meaning of the new name in verse 2. “Sought out” will really be a new name to a nation, ten of whose tribes are still undiscovered; and the remaining two, who are “as a body nowhere, as a people everywhere,” have to be sought out of every land. “Not forsaken” will be a name equally new, in the case of a people who appear to be now as much the foes as they were once the favourites of Heaven—who look as much abandoned by God as they have been despised and neglected by men.

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## CHAPTER LXIII.

THE first six verses of this chapter have presented a very formidable difficulty to expositors who have adopted the figurative scheme of interpretation, and as might be expected where imagination and not the letter of Scripture has been made the interpreter, a great variety of views have been taken regarding the passage, the expositions of which have been both far fetched and meagre. One expositor remarks that “it has been regarded by many as merely a fragment of some other prophecy, which has by mistake found its way into this portion of the book!” a more summary than scriptural way of disposing of it, but very illustrative of the difficulties with which the figurative theory is at every step attended.

According to the view given in these pages of the scope of Isaiah's prophesying, the passage is introduced just where it might be expected, and harmonizes both with the context and other Scripture. It refers to the destruction of his enemies by Christ previous to the establishment of his kingdom in Jerusalem, and, through the Jews, over all the earth. It is manifestly inapplicable to the circumstances of Christ's first coming: his attitude then being the most contrary possible to that of a victorious conqueror; and the blood with which he was sprinkled being not that of his enemies as here, but his own. At the period when by fire and by sword he shall plead with all flesh,—at that period which shall precede and introduce his reign on earth, he is often represented under the character of a warrior, see xli. 2: "The Lord shall go forth and fight against those nations as when he fought in the day of battle;" "Gird thy sword on thy thigh." It is to this period of judging among the nations that the beginning of the chapter refers.

1. *Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious (or, decked) in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.*

When contemplating the prophetic scene of Israel's future and brighter history, the eye of Isaiah is arrested by the spectacle of one marching from Bozrah, the capital of Idumea, to Jerusalem, whose dyed garments tell that he had been engaged in scenes of blood,—whose glorious apparel proclaims his distinguished station,—and whose manly bearing shows his strength. The prophet asks, "Who is this?" The question is answered by the party himself, and the reply determines who he is. The only warrior who could say that he spoke in righteousness is Christ. In most of the descriptions of the punishment of guilty nations in the last days, it is said that it will be righteous or just: "In righteousness doth he judge and



make war," see i. 27. But while righteous as well as terrible in his judgments on his enemies, he will be also "mighty to save"—to save his people. It is of the same period that it is said, "The Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel," Joel iii. 16. Of the judgments of these times, Edom or Idumea, and Bozrah its capital, are more than once said to be in part the scene, see xxxiv. 5. Hence the Lord is represented as coming from it after having punished his enemies there, through what instrumentality it is not here said: "The indignation of the Lord is upon all nations. My sword shall come down upon Idumea;" "The Lord hath a great sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea," xxxiv. 1, 8; "Edom shall be a desolate wilderness," Joel iii. 19.

2-4. *Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat? I have trodden the wine-press alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.*

The prophet not yet satisfied—unable to solve the mystery of the Redeemer appearing dipped in the blood of others, asks an explanation: "Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel?" To have the dress red, dyed with blood—to have the garments soaked with it, as those of him who treadeth in the wine-fat<sup>1</sup> are soaked with the juice of the grape, which is the meaning of the expression, as appears from verse 3—"their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments"—is painfully significative of the unparalleled carnage of the day of the Lord. So in connexion with the same events Christ appears to John as "clothed in a vesture dipped in blood;" and as "treading the wine-press of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty

<sup>1</sup> "Wine-fat," תַּב, the trough in which the grapes were trodden, and out of which the juice ran into the tub placed alongside.

God," Rev. xix. 13, 15. The same idea of awful destruction is expressed when it is said also in reference to the same period, "The wine-press was trodden without the city, and blood came out even to the horses' bridles," Rev. xiv. 20. In reply to the question of the prophet why his garment was thus bloodstained, the party addressed says, that it was caused by his trampling in fury upon the people. The words "I have trodden the wine-press alone," &c., may be understood as signifying that the whole was his doing, and hence those marks of bloodshed upon him; as it is said, "Behold the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him," xl. 10. But rather the words indicate the general helplessness and abasement of the Jewish nation, to whom, by the judgments of their enemies, deliverance will then be brought. This view is supported by the 5th verse, which represents Christ as amazed that of the people there was none with him—none on their side able to stand up on their behalf, and deliver them, and therefore must he do so himself. This appears to be the meaning in several parallel instances: "He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him," lix. 16. The 4th verse determines still more the application of the whole passage to be that which has been stated. Compare it with xxxiv. 1-8, or lix. 16-18; and it is manifest that this passage alludes to the same events as these do, viz., to the season when the Lord shall judge among the nations. The common application of this passage to the bearing alone by Christ the burden of the world's guilt, is a popular error. To this subject there is here no manner of reference.—The meaning of the "year of my redeemed" is taught in the parallel passage, xxxiv. 3, to be the year of Israel's deliverance from her enemies. It is "the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion."

5, 6. *And I looked, and there was none to help ; and I wondered that there was none to uphold : therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me ; and my fury, it upheld me. And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth.*

These verses are very much a repetition of verse 3: " Mine own arm brought salvation unto me," that is, brought deliverance for Israel ; " My glory it upheld me," that is, in inflicting vengeance on his and their enemies. That will be both the day of vengeance against his enemies, and the year of Israel's redemption. " Make them drunk," that is, make them reel and fall like a drunken man. The figure is common, li. 21-23. Those to whom the passage refers are clearly the armies gathered at last against Jerusalem : " I will feed them that oppress thee with their own flesh ; and they shall be drunken with their own blood as with sweet wine," xlix. 25, 26. " Their strength" is in verse 3 rendered " blood." The clause is translated by Lowth, " I spilled their life blood to the ground."

The subject of the prophecy is now altered, and what follows takes the form of a prayer, which may be regarded as put into the lips of the Jewish nation, or at least of those of them who shall be waiting for the deliverance of the nation in the last days—a prayer calling for the interference of God in their behalf. It may be regarded as illustrative of the injunction given in verses 6, 7 ; as being uttered by the watchmen among Israel who are to give the Lord no rest until he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. Unlike the other songs generally introduced by the prophet, which refer to the time of Israel's restored prosperity, this refers to a period preceding it. The others are chiefly songs of thanksgiving on account of their prosperity, this is a prayer for it. It extends to the close of the 64th chapter, and is one of very great pathos and beauty.

7-10. *I will mention the loving-kindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses. For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Saviour. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them.*

Verses 7-14 contain an acknowledgment of past mercies. The prayer is thus introduced by an appeal to what God had already done—to what had been the past experience of Israel; just as in the prayers of David we often find the psalmist filling his mouth with arguments drawn from the past dealings of God with him; for example, Ps. iii. 4, 5; iv. 1, second clause. Fortified by the remembrance of the past, the Jews, or the praying portion of them, pour out a singularly warm and affecting supplication to God for the removal of their woes, extending from verse 15 to the close of the following chapter. Verse 7 appeals in general terms to the goodness of God to Israel in former ages. There is great reiteration of parallel expressions according to the Hebrew idiom, denoting the very large measure of mercy experienced, and the deep sense of it cherished by those who speak. The review of these in Israel's past history presents so many acts of loving-kindness, that, to embrace them all, the language of acknowledgment is renewed again and again. Some of these are particularized: their relation to him as his peculiar people (8), his early deliverances of them (9), his compassion for them when they had rebelled, excited by his remembrance of the past. The clause "surely they are my people," describes the covenant relation in which God stood to them, and in virtue of which he had often been their saviour or deliverer. This is often represented as a very peculiar privilege of Israel in the eyes of God:



"Thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend," xli. 8. "In all their affliction he was afflicted."<sup>1</sup> This declaration expresses the intensity of divine fellow-feeling with Israel under all their calamities. So it is said, "The soul of the Lord was grieved for the misery of Israel," Judges x. 18. As in other places he identifies himself with the believer—"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *me*?"—so here he identifies himself with the covenanted seed of Abraham, who, notwithstanding their unnatural unbelief, are still beloved. "The angel of his presence," that is, who stands in his presence,—here probably denoting Christ, whose appearance as an angel is so often introduced in Old Testament history, Ex. xxiii. 20; xxxii. 34. "He bare them," expresses the idea of great tenderness and care, as of a nurse or shepherd. The Lord's preservation of the universe is represented as effected by his word: "He upholdeth all things by the word of his power;" but that of his children by his carrying them; "underneath them are the everlasting arms." The same language is also applied to his care for Israel in connexion with another figure, that of an eagle carrying her young, Ex. xix. 4; Deut. xxxii. 11. The whole verse is a beautiful epitome of the conduct of God towards the Jews in the earlier part of their history: and their conduct towards him is as correctly depicted, in the following verse (11), as a history of rebellion and vexation. The same complaint is often made against them: "How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, and grieve him in the desert," Ps. lxxviii. 40; "In the wilderness your fathers tempted me: wherefore I was grieved with that generation," Heb. iii. 8.

<sup>1</sup> "He was afflicted." A difference of opinion has existed in regard to the proper reading here. The MSS. are nearly equal between two readings, the one לֵ, *lo*, to him; the other לֹ, *lo*, not. The former, "there was affliction to him," is the reading of the common version. The other, "there was not affliction," would signify, there was not utter prostration, God supporting him under his troubles, or removing them.

In consequence of this rebellion on their part, the Lord often fought against them, until ultimately they were delivered over into the hands of their enemies.

11-14. *Then he remembered the days of old, Moses and his people, saying, Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd (or, shepherds) of his flock? where is he that put his Holy Spirit within him? that led them by the right hand of Moses with his glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name? that led them through the deep, as an horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble? As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest: so didst thou lead thy people, to make thyself a glorious name.*

While such was the state of Israel—the state in which they still continue—the Lord is reminded how he was moved to pity by the recollection of what he had been to them in past ages, particularly in reference to their deliverance from Egypt and in the wilderness, this being employed as an argument for his interference again. He is represented as having asked himself, Where is he who brought them up out of the sea? and as recounting what he had done for them, as if his thoughts were: “Must they for ever continue trodden under foot; cannot, will not he who shed on them his love, and extended to them his arm in past ages, again shine on them and lift them up?” “The shepherds<sup>1</sup> (margin) of his flock,” that is, Moses and Aaron. “Within him,” that is, within the flock. Of those who entered Canaan it is said, “Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the Lord, that he had done for Israel,” Joshua xxiv. 31. “As an horse in the wilderness.” The comparison here is from the facility with which the horse of the desert traverses it, free as it is from whatever would cause stumbling; so secure had been the path of Israel through the Red Sea. The comparison in verse 14 appears to be drawn from the custom of cattle retiring to-

<sup>1</sup> Shepherd, in the Hebrew, רֹעֶה, but most MSS. have the plural, shepherds.

wards noon from the scorching heat of the exposed hillside to the shade and water of the valley. The repose of cattle in such circumstances is a beautiful emblem of the rest promised to Israel after all their wanderings in the wilderness.

15, 16. *Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory : where is thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding (or, the multitude) of thy bowels and of thy mercies toward me ? are they restrained ? Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not : thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer ; thy name is from everlasting (or, our Redeemer from everlasting is thy name).*

After this review of the Almighty's dealings with the nation, and the calling to his remembrance his compassion for them, Israel is represented in the remainder of the chapter as appealing to God's pity, and urging various arguments fitted to move it: What had become of all the zeal and strength exercised in past times for their welfare? Whither had they gone? "The sounding of the bowels." Similar expressions, as the "yearning of the bowels," are common in Scripture, and denote affection or compassion. The use of the expression arises from the ancient opinion, that the bowels, signifying the viscera in the neighbourhood of the heart—the thoracic viscera—were the seat of the emotions. Verse 16 contains a very strong expression of Israel's confidence in God. The meaning seems to be, that though the patriarchs, Abraham and Israel (Jacob), the fathers of the nation, might forget them, yet God would not, however appearances might seem to indicate the contrary. The passage is very much the parallel of xlix. 15, "Can a woman forget her sucking child?"

17-19. *O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our heart from thy fear ? Return, for thy servants' sake, the tribes of thine inheritance. The people of thy holiness have possessed it but a little while : our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary.*

*We are thine : thou never barest rule over them ; they were not called by thy name (or, thy name was not called upon them).*

The prayer proceeds to argue for the return of the Divine favour, from the circumstance that Israel's hardness of heart was the Lord's ordering, and hence he who had inflicted the curse could alone remove it. The spiritual blindness of the Jewish nation is clearly judicial—the deserved national penalty of great national sin ; and the language of this verse may be regarded as a recognition of this, not as a complaint of it : as an acknowledgment of God's sovereignty,—that perfection which is seen alike in his works of nature, and of providence, and of grace. And as experience contradicts the idea that there is anything in this doctrine at variance either with God's moral rectitude or man's free will, all left for man to do is to adore, not to find fault. Another plea that is urged in language plaintive and affecting to an extreme, for the return of the favour of God, is the circumstance that they stood in a relation to him in which no other nation did (17, 19). They were above every other the privileged people of God—they were his servants—the twelve tribes whom he had made his heritage—the people of his holiness. And another argument that is employed is, that they, his favoured people, had possessed their land and sanctuary but a little (18), while they who had trodden it down were enemies to whom the Lord had never stood in any such relation as that in which he had stood to Israel. The argument would be an appropriate one at the present day in the case even of the two tribes, and still more in that of the ten. The dispersion of the latter occurred somewhat above 700 years, and that of the two tribes not 1500 years, after the possession of Canaan by the Jews, and even during that period it was not always occupied by them ; and already for upwards of 1800 years has it been in the hands of their enemies. Over no nation has God borne rule (19) as he did over the Jews



during the Mosaic dispensation. He was not the God of Assyria, of Greece, of Rome, and the other enemies of Israel who have possessed their countries,—he is not the God even of Protestant kingdoms, as he was of Jerusalem.

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## CHAPTER LXIV.

THE prayer of the Jews for recovery from their calamities is continued to the close of this chapter in the same strain of earnest and affectionate pleading with God as in the preceding. It possesses, in a very marked degree, the characteristics of prayer in the Holy Ghost,—gratitude and praise—confidence in God—the acknowledgment of his sovereignty—the resting all upon the ground of what is asked being for the divine glory: confession, earnestness, expectancy, and such like.

1, 2. *Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence; as when the melting fire (or, the fire of meltings) burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil; to make thy name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence!*

In reference to what is said before of the land and sanctuary being possessed and trodden down by strangers, God is besought to judge the nations his adversaries. The figure of rending the heavens, or tearing asunder the firmament which veils him from the eye of men, is very appropriate when applied to his coming for purposes of vengeance. That of coming down is also of common occurrence in Scripture, in the same circumstances, Ps. xviii. 9; cxliv. 5, 6. The flowing or melting down of the mountains at his approach is likewise often introduced, particularly as here in connexion with yet future national

judgments. Thus, in the 97th Psalm, a song which refers to the state of matters when the Lord reigneth, when the daughters of Judah shall rejoice because of his judgments, it is said, "the hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord." The clause "as when the melting fire<sup>1</sup> burneth" (2) describes the extent to which the mountains are said to be affected by his approach; they will be so as what is melted or boiled is agitated by the heat. The effect of his appearing will be the consternation of his enemies.

3, 4. *When thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, thou camest down, the mountains flowed down at thy presence. For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides thee (or, seen a God besides thee, which doeth so for him, &c.), what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.*

The figures of the Lord coming down—of the mountains melting at his approach, are not, however, limited to the events of the last national woes, the text in the 3d verse appealing in the same language to what God had already done for Israel in punishing her enemies, as in the destruction of the Egyptian host, and in other miraculous interferences. He is urged to do for her again in reference to her final deliverance what he had done in former ages. There follows a declaration that there is no God who doeth such things for those who seek him as the true God. This is the marginal and more literal meaning of the passage, and is that adopted by critics. In its connexion here the clause amounts to this, that none had seen such things as God had done for Israel. In behalf of no other nation has such divine interference been exercised; towards none has such favour been shown. The passage, which contains an abstract truth, is adapted by

<sup>1</sup> "Melting fire," מִתְּקַיִם. The translation of Gesenius, on the authority of some Jewish commentators, is generally adopted, which gives to the word the meaning of twigs, brushwood. Lowth translates, "as the fire kindleth the dry fuel."

Paul to the specific question of the future blessedness of believers, 1 Cor. ii. 9. In the text in Isaiah, however, there is no such reference; the allusion is to the past,<sup>1</sup> not to the future. Israel, in pleading for God's miraculous interference again, argues that it had been experienced by her before, and by none else.

5. *Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness; those that remember thee in thy ways: behold, thou art wroth; for we have sinned: in those is continuance, and we shall be saved.*

The prayer urges next, as an argument for favour to the nation, the character of God which leads him to meet (favourably) the righteous, and such as remember him (walking) in his ways. This passage has been very perplexing both to ancient and modern expositors, not from any diversity of readings, but from the difficulty of educing the meaning of the original. The chief difficulty arises from the indefiniteness of the expression translated, "in those is continuance,"<sup>2</sup> in determining what is the antecedent of the pronoun. Some supply "sins"—in these sins is continuance, that is, long have we sinned. In this case the last clause is understood interrogatively, and shall we be saved? Others supply "ways" from the previous clause—in these ways (or gracious dealings of God, which the word may signify) is continuance, that is, God is unchanging in his dealings with men.

6, 7. *But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed (or, melted) us, because (or, by the hand) of our iniquities.*

These verses contain a confession, on the part of Israel, of their sin, which is acknowledged as the root of all their

<sup>1</sup> "What he hath prepared," עָשָׂה, from עָשָׂה, to make, do; literally, what he doeth.

<sup>2</sup> בְּהֵם עוֹלָם.

evils. The description, which is still more emphatic in the original, contrasts strongly with Jewish self-righteousness. The figure contained in the last clause of verse 6 is very beautiful. The Jews have been tossed about and scattered over the earth like the faded leaves before the winds of autumn, and here they are represented as confessing at last that it is their sin which hath done it. The clause "there is none that calleth on thy name" (7), indicates how complete the depravity of the nation has become. "To take hold of thee," that is, in order to acquire strength or peace. So similarly, "Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me," xxvii. 5.

8-12. *But now, O Lord, thou art our Father: we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand. Be not wroth very sore, O Lord, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people. Thy holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burnt up with fire: and all our pleasant things are laid waste. Wilt thou refrain thyself for these things, O Lord? wilt thou hold thy peace, and afflict us very sore?*

In the first two of these verses, Israel is represented as pleading her national relation to God and dependence on him, and in the 10th and 11th verses, the desolation of the land, even of Jerusalem and the temple, as arguments for his interference. These concluding verses are very similar to the close of the previous chapter, repetition—the saying of the same words—being a natural and common accompaniment of earnest prayer. "Our holy and beautiful house" (11), refers to the temple at Jerusalem which was built by Solomon, and was finally destroyed by fire at the capture of the city by Titus. The prayer throughout, and especially the close of it, is distinguished by the greatest tenderness and earnestness; and the plaintive and sad air which pervades it, renders it most suitable in the circumstances of the Jewish nation. Any-



thing more adapted to their condition, and more calculated to effect its purpose—to have power with God and to prevail, it is impossible to conceive. It describes the feelings of Israel when the Lord shall pour out upon them the spirit of grace and of supplications.

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## CHAPTER LXV.

THIS chapter is chiefly occupied with detailing the cause which has induced the Lord to give Israel so long over to judgment, viz., their sin ; and with predicting the eventual removal of their calamities, and a state of great prosperity and blessedness to the nation.

1. *I am sought of them that asked not for me ; I am found of them that sought me not : I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name.*

The allusion in this verse to the Gentiles—for that they are intended appears from the application made of the passage to them in Rom. x. 20—seems to be introduced in this way, as furnishing evidence that it was not because God's ways were unequal that the Jews continued in the state of degradation to which they would be subjected. As a pledge that they would be heard when they should turn to the Lord with supplication, the case of the Gentiles is referred to. If God would deal so mercifully with them who were not called by his name, that is, to whom he had never stood in such a relation as he had done to the Jewish nation, much more would he be gracious to Israel.<sup>1</sup> The second of these clauses is to be explained by the first. It does not teach that God is found

<sup>1</sup> "Behold me," הִנֵּנִי, literally, "here am I," expressive of readiness to come to their help.

where he is not sought at all; but that if sought at all, even after long delay, he will be found. The first words imply that he would be sought, but by those who had long not asked for him. The second and following verses refer to the Jewish nation being so understood by Paul, Romans x. 21.

2-5. *I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts; a people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face; that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick (or, upon bricks); which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments; which eat swine's flesh, and broth (or, pieces) of abominable things is in their vessels; which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose (or anger), a fire that burneth all the day.*

In these verses the Almighty justifies his judgments on Israel, and his long delay in answering the prayer offered up in the preceding chapters. He first names generally the nature of their sin, viz., rebellion (2), aggravated by the circumstance of its being persevered in in opposition to his gracious invitations; and in the following verses he specifies some instances of it. The general charge is to be understood as relating to the whole history of their revolt from God to the present hour, and forward to the time when they shall cease from their unnatural rebellion. The specific charges embrace the same epoch, but divided into two periods, the earlier one when they were chargeable with idolatry, and the later when, as in the days of our Lord, they were distinguished by pride and self-righteousness (5).—The expression “spread out my hands,” is a natural symbol of pressing and anxious invitation. God hath done this through the prophets, through Christ and his apostles, through his word and providence, and, latterly, on a small scale, through various sections of the Christian Church. The words “to my face,” express an aggravation of guilt. Of all sin it may be said that it is committed under the eye of God, but the customs which

follow were so pre-eminently, being perpetrated publicly and before the very face of heaven. By "gardens," are to be understood the groves which were the scene of the grossest heathen immoralities. The sin of building altars with bricks<sup>1</sup> lay in its being contrary to the requirement that the Jewish altars should be constructed of hewn stone; a rule, like so many others in the Mosaic code, intended chiefly to preserve the separation of Israel from the heathen. Some have supposed that the reference is to the worship of God on the housetops, which were flat and covered with bricks or tiles; a custom which is repeatedly condemned in other places, 2 Kings xxiii. 12; Zeph. i. 5. The first division of verse 4 refers to the practice of the necromancers or pretended diviners, whose prevalence formed another of the grosser features and follies of heathenism. The object of frequenting tombs,<sup>2</sup> whose construction permitted of their being tenanted by those who had, or who chose, no other lodging, as is seen from many parts of Scripture, as Matt. viii. 28, was obviously to hold intercourse with the dead. The guilt of eating swine's flesh lay in its being a violation of the law of Moses, which prohibited it doubtless because a heathen custom; swine's flesh being offered to Ceres and other heathen deities, and eaten at their feasts. The connexion of the last clause with the previous allusions to divination, has given rise to the supposition that broth of abominable things was employed in necromancy. Was it this passage that suggested to Shakspeare the idea of his witches' hell-broth, described in the 4th Act of the witches of Macbeth? His description is beyond all question that of broth of abominable things. The self-right-

<sup>1</sup> לְבָנִים, literally, upon bricks.

<sup>2</sup> Monuments, מְצוֹיִם, literally, "concealed places." The arrangements of eastern burying grounds would present many places for concealment. Some, however, have supposed that the allusion is to the secret places—the well-known *adyta* of heathen temples.

eousness of the Jews—a later phase of their sin—a characteristic of it in the days of our Lord, is then noticed (5). The second division of the verse may be understood in two ways; either as descriptive of the hatefulness of guilty Israel in the sight of God, expressed by the offensiveness of smoke to the nostril,<sup>1</sup> especially when continued—proceeding from a fire burning alway; or smoke and fire may represent the divine anger (margin), as in Ps. xviii. 8.

6, 7. *Behold, it is written before me : I will not keep silence, but will recompense, even recompense into their bosom, your iniquities, and the iniquities of your fathers together, saith the Lord, which have burnt incense upon the mountains, and blasphemed me upon the hills : therefore will I measure their former work into their bosom.*

The judgment in which the sin of Israel, previously described, would involve them, is here introduced. It followed close upon their self-righteousness—the stage of their national sin last depicted—and it continues still, while they go about to establish their own righteousness. The word “recompense”—the reiteration of it, according to the Hebrew idiom—and the expression “into your bosom,” all imply the severity of their national punishment; and abundantly has the language been borne out by their protracted sufferings. The last expression may be understood in a twofold sense; either in that of a similar expression, “upon the head,” Ps. vii. 16; or rather in the sense of the last clause of verse 7, in which there appears reference to the custom of receiving anything into the bosom or front of the dress, which, in Oriental costume, being loose and capacious, was used for carrying what could not be contained in the hands; see Ruth iii. 15; Luke vi. 38. Recompense into the bosom, would thus imply a large measure of judgments. The long-suffering of God restrains him from punishing nations at

<sup>1</sup> “Nose,” *חַס*, from *חָנַן*, to breathe, signifying, 1. the nose; 2. anger.



the commencement of a career of sin. Even the iniquities of one generation are not enough to provoke the Lord to anger. The cup of a nation's guilt does not overflow until it contain their iniquity to the third and fourth generation—the iniquity of fathers and children together. The imprecation of the Jews, that the blood of Christ might be upon themselves and their children, did not fall to the ground.

8. *Thus saith the Lord, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all.*

Even in her curses, Israel has been a favoured nation. Sins, which in the case of others would have resulted in their extinction, were not to do so, it is foretold, in her case. The comparison is obvious. As a quantity of spoiled grapes, on the point of being thrown away, are preserved for the sake of a few good ones that are discovered in the mass, so Israel, although near destruction, and deserving it, would not be annihilated. Gleaning grapes were to be left, xvii. 6. Even in her final judgments, a seventh part of her male population is to remain, iv. 1. —The clause “a blessing is in it,” implies the value of the cluster, with reference, perhaps, to the ultimate purposes of God regarding Israel, who are yet to fill the face of the world with fruit.

9, 10. *And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there. And Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor a place for the herds to lie down in, for my people that have sought me.*

These verses foretell the repossession of Judea by Israel, the two districts—Sharon in the west, and Achor in the east, beyond Jordan—representing the whole land. The previous verses, predictive of their singular preservation, have been fulfilled in their past and present history; these are still to be fulfilled when the Lord shall assemble

them out of the countries where they have been scattered, and will give them the land of Israel, Ezek. xi. 17.

11-15. *But ye are they that forsake the Lord, that forget my holy mountain, that prepare a table for that troop (or, Gad), and that furnish the drink-offering unto that number (or, Meni). Therefore will I number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter : because when I called, ye did not answer ; when I spake, ye did not hear ; but did evil before mine eyes, and did choose that wherein I delighted not. Therefore thus saith the Lord God (or, Adonai Jehovah), Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry : behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty : behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed : behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation (or, breaking) of spirit. And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen : for the Lord God (or, Adonai Jehovah) shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name :*

The cause of that contrast which has so long existed between the proceedings and the promises of God to Israel is here, as in many other instances, reverted to in connexion with their future history, viz., their national guilt, particularly their original idolatry.—The expressions, “for that troop,” “unto that number,” should evidently be left untranslated as in the margin, Gad and Meni, although what idols are intended by these appellatives is undetermined. Henderson and Alexander render them Fortune and Fate. The expressions, “prepare a table,” “furnish a drink-offering,” allude to the heathen customs of placing food and pouring out libations before idols in their temples. In consequence of the idolatry of their earlier history, and their adherence to sin in opposition to the invitations and remonstrances of God (12), would they be devoted to the sword. The judgments of the Jews, represented previously by their being numbered to the sword, are further expressed (13, 14) by their subjection to hunger, thirst, shame, and agony of spirit ; while it is predicted, as an aggravation of their sufferings, that the God of Israel would have servants from among the Gentiles, who would enjoy the blessings forfeited by his cove-

nanted people. The fulfilment of these predictions is manifest. Gentile believers have long occupied that place at the Lord's table which Israel once occupied, and have enjoyed the spiritual blessings which they have rejected. The subject is further enlarged upon (15). The very name of Jew has been a curse to that once favoured race; during the ages of their dispersion and punishment, it has been a byword and a reproach, enough to bring insult and oppression on all who have borne it.—The expression “call his servants by another name,” may express simply the very different treatment and condition of Gentile believers; but rather, applying to it the literal accomplishment that it has received, it refers to the name of Christian.

16, 17. *That he who blesseth himself in the earth, shall bless himself in the God of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth, shall swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes. For, behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind (or, upon the heart).*

The remaining verses foretell the appearing of the new earth, and the blissful condition of Israel then. Verse 16 is more naturally connected with the following than with the preceding context. In the one case, its exposition is as difficult as in the other it is easy. Lowth connects it with what follows, translating the first words, “Whoso<sup>1</sup> blesseth himself,” that is, he that invoceth blessing on himself. In the new earth, all will seek their happiness in God, not as now, in idols, or in the service of the creature. The Lord will then be known pre-eminently as the God of truth, in his fulfilment of every promise made to Jew and Gentile. Then the curse will be removed from this world, and its troubles will be forgotten in the blessings that will succeed (17).—The meaning of the expres-

<sup>1</sup> אִשֵּׁר.

sion "new heavens and a new earth" is taught by 2 Pet. iii. 16, where, after describing the coming of the day of the Lord, the passing away of the heavens, and the burning up of the earth, he adds, in reference to the prophecy of Isaiah, "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Both a physical and a moral change seems implied here. The former cannot, however, imply the annihilation of the earth; for here, in Isaiah, its inhabitants are represented, subsequently to its renewal, as building houses and planting vineyards. So, in other descriptions of the same event, while part of the language appears to imply the annihilation of the earth, what follows shows that that language must be understood in a qualified sense. Thus, in Psalm lxxv. 3, it is said, "The earth and all the inhabitants are dissolved;" but absolute dissolution is not intended, for it is added, "I bear up the pillars thereof." The purifying of the world by fire does not necessarily imply its destruction, any more than its cleansing by the waters of the deluge did. What the moral revolution of the world at last will be, is more clear. It will be made a world of righteousness and peace. If there be much mysterious about the new earth, still more may this be expected in the case of the new heavens. One thing, however, appears clear, that as Christ then supplants Satan, the prince of the power of *the air*, and his host of *wicked spirits*<sup>1</sup> *in high places*, and as his risen saints live and reign with him, there will be thus far new heavens—Christ and his saints reigning in the regions of the air, whence Satan and his hosts shall have been expelled, as well as from that earth on which they now walk up and down.

18, 19. *But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create : for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And*

<sup>1</sup> Τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας, equivalent to τὰ πνεύματα πονηρά.



*I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying.*

In these and the following verses there are described some of the blessings of Israel, when the kingdom of Christ shall be come. First, there is her joy. It is then that there will be given to them that mourn in Zion the oil of joy for mourning. They will then be a rejoicing, too, to the whole earth: "As ye were a curse, so ye shall be a blessing." They will be a rejoicing also to the Lord: "He will rejoice over thee with joy—he will joy over thee with singing."

20. *There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner, being an hundred years old, shall be accursed.*

Longevity is next promised. "An infant of days" is one a few days old; and the clause implies, that at that age none will die. "An old man who has not filled his days" is one who does not reach the full limit of human life, protracted as it then will be. The following clause implies, that one dying at the age of a hundred years will be accounted young. The last clause is more difficult. Does it imply that sin will exist in the new earth, or is it to be regarded as a supposition? Does it imply that the sinner will perish young? according to the measure of human existence then as is taught in the previous clause, one of a hundred years being a child. Does it imply that such will be immediately accursed, or pass immediately into hell? the general judgment being over. This appears to be the only passage that seems to teach the presence of sin in the new earth. That it may intrude its hateful presence there cannot be impossible, for it forced itself within the precincts of heaven and of paradise; and it will do so on a large scale when the 1000 (prophetic) years are expired, Rev. xx. 7-9.

21-23. *And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build,*

*and another inhabit ; they shall not plant, and another eat : for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy (or, shall make them continue long, or, shall wear out) the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth trouble : for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them.*

Another promise to Israel is the peaceful and permanent enjoyment of the blessings of industry. In the comparison of their days to those of a tree, there is allusion to the great age which certain trees attain,—such as the oak, the cedar. Of some trees it has been asserted that they reach the age of several thousands of years. The clause “bring forth for trouble,” teaches that their children will not, as now, be born to trouble, or be subject to early death.

24, 25. *And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer ; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock : and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord.*

The next blessing introduced is the anticipation then by the Lord of all the desires and wants of Israel. What is now the privilege of the believer, Dan. ix. 21, will then be the experience of the nation. Having enumerated various blessings of the millennial state, at the conclusion of the picture, Isaiah, as if no language could represent the glorious reality, appropriately sums up with an allusion to indescribable things, see xi. 6-9. And as a guarantee of the security and peace of Israel, which also by contrast enhances the value of their privileges, he closes with the declaration, that while the curse will be removed from them and their land, it will remain on Satan the arch-apostate, the Seducer and Tormentor of the world. The curse pronounced in Paradise, “dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life,” will not be revoked in the new earth. With the author of all dispeace bound—with its chief source cut off—till the thousand years be fulfilled, none will hurt or destroy.

## CHAPTER LXVI.

THIS chapter, after reverting to the guilt and punishment of Israel, 1-4, predicts the rapidity with which her final recovery will be effected, 6-9, and details a variety of particulars regarding her future blessedness, which are intermingled and contracted with allusions to the Lord's dealings with his enemies.

1-3. *Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool : where is the house that ye build unto me ? and where is the place of my rest ? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord : but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. He that killeth an ox, is as if he slew a man ; he that sacrificeth a lamb (or, kid), as if he cut off a dog's neck ; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood ; he that burneth (or, maketh a memorial of) incense, as if he blessed an idol : yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations.*

The hypocrisy and idolatry of Israel,—the prominent characteristics of their national guilt during the period of their possession of Judea, which first drew down on them national judgment,—are noticed and reprehended in these verses. Their general import appears to be, that the Lord, though independent of his creatures, as the universal Monarch and Creator of all things, whose throne is in heaven, and who is so exalted above man, is yet pleased with the contrite<sup>1</sup> heart (2) ; but this, the only temple which he regards, the Jews had withheld ; for with their religious professions and practice of sacrificial rites, they

<sup>1</sup> "Poor," עני, signifies not only poor in the common sense of the term, but also as here, humble, lowly, Zech. ix. 9.

had united the grossest vice and the most revolting idolatry (3). The idea of Henderson, that in these verses God reprobates the attempt made by the unbelieving portion of the Jews to rebuild the temple, receives no support from other Scripture. The acts of the nation after the Spirit shall be poured out upon them, will not be of a kind to require rebuke. All allusions to their sinning after their return to Judea must be understood of their first or national return, see xi. 11. The italics in verse 3 are not in the original, and are not required, although the paraphrase which they give is generally adopted by commentators. Lowth translates, "He that slayeth an ox killeth a man;" and so with the other clauses. The charge against Israel is, that those who at one time offered sacrifice, at another committed murder. It is the same as that brought against them in another description of their guilt, "Righteousness lodged in it (Jerusalem), but now murderers," i. 21. They are next charged with joining in the idolatrous practices of offering dogs and swine, and blessing idols. It is the same sin - which is condemned in a more general form, when they are threatened with judgment for desiring the oaks, and choosing the gardens where the rites of idolatry were celebrated, i. 29. Both the dog and the swine were offered in sacrifice by the heathen, and they are classed together as equally vile in the estimation of the Jew, 2 Pet. ii. 22.

4-6. *I also will choose their delusions (or, devices), and will bring their fears upon them ; because when I called, none did answer ; when I spake, they did not hear : but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not. Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word ; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified : but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed. A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the Lord that rendereth recompence to his enemies.*

The judgments of Israel for their sin, and their final removal, are here briefly described. Their trials are re-



presented as proceeding both from God and man; as consisting of delusions (calamities) chosen for them by God, and of hatred and injury inflicted by Gentiles (5), their brethren, as all alike the seed of Adam. The hatred of Gentiles has formed a very prominent feature in Jewish degradation and suffering. It is here said (5) to be cherished from a regard to the divine glory. This has been a characteristic of all persecution, Popish, Protestant, and every other, but particularly true of that poured on the head of the Jew; their oppressors in past ages, and their insulters in the present, are singularly confident that they are doing God service. But the time is fixed when the Lord shall appear to the joy of his ancient people and the confusion of their enemies. When this will be is taught in verse 6th, the import of which is made more clear by verses 15th, 16th, which determine it to be the time of the final judgments of the nations. The abruptness of verse 6th is in keeping with the suddenness with which the Lord will appear when he ariseth to make his enemies his footstool. The city from which the deliverance of Israel is said to come is Jerusalem: "I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory," xlv. 13; "In mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance," Joel ii. 32. In still closer coincidence with the language of the text, it is written, "The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; but the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel," Joel iii. 16.

7-9. *Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man-child. Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth (or, beget)? saith the Lord: shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the womb? saith thy God.*

These verses describe the rapidity with which Israel

will at last evolve from her degradation to the full possession of national and spiritual privileges. The prophetic fact here announced has been already noticed, see xxvi. 20. It is then that they will fly as doves to their windows.—The clause, “Shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the womb?” is rendered by Lowth, “Shall I, who beget, restrain the birth?”

10, 11. *Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her : rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her ; that ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations ; that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory (or, brightness).*

All, whether Jew or Gentile, who resemble the God of Israel in his love to that nation, and his mourning for their calamities, are here invited to rejoice over their recovery, and to participate in their blessings. The same call to rejoice in their final prosperity is often made, lxv. 18. Such will be their blessedness, when they shall be a royal diadem in the hand of the Lord, that even nature is called on to rejoice over the joyful spectacle, xliv. 23. The clause, “the breasts of her consolation,” implies, as appears from the following verses, that through her, spiritual consolation and blessing will flow to others. If the diminishing of Israel be the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness? Then they shall prosper that love Jerusalem. The reiteration of the figures, milk, suck out, &c., implies the most abundant measure of blessing.

12-14. *For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream : then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you ; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem. And when ye see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb ; and the hand of the Lord shall be known toward his servants, and his indignation towards his enemies.*

How much the condition of Israel then will be fitted to

gladden all who have mourned for her, is first declared. The comparison used is in the East peculiarly striking. What in the season of drought is an empty channel, is at other times a flooded river; so the channel of Israel's peace has long been dry; instead of a stream of honour from the hands of Gentiles, there has flowed towards her a flood of insult and oppression: but at last her shame will be dried up, and her peace and glory will be full.—What is meant by “the glory of the Gentiles” is explained by chapter lx. It may refer particularly to the wealth which will then be put at Israel's service, lx. 5. The obvious figure of those who love her sucking the breast of Israel is repeated, together with comparisons drawn from other maternal duties. For the import of “borne upon the sides,” see lx. 4. The meaning of the figures in the previous verses is taught in verse 13. In a previous chapter, li. 3, it is promised, “The Lord shall comfort Zion, he will comfort all her waste places;” and here the measure of that comfort to her and to all who love her, is given in the most significant of comparisons. The words “in Jerusalem” may denote either the source or the locality of the blessing. It is true both that Jerusalem will be a rejoicing, and that then many people shall go up to the mountain of the Lord.—The expression “your bones shall flourish” is very expressive of the removal of grief. It is common in Scripture, as in Ps. vi., to represent intense sorrow as affecting not only the soul (3), but also the body (8, 9), and even the bones (2); and it does so: but it is no common sorrow that thus tells upon the bodily frame. To have the bones flourishing again, implies that the severity of grief has passed away.—The clause, “the hand of the Lord,” &c., which implies protection, is explained by other Scripture referring to the same event: “The Lord will be the strength of the children of Israel.”

15, 16. *For, behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots*

*like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire, and by his sword, will the Lord plead with all flesh : and the slain of the Lord shall be many.*

The contrast introduced in the close of the previous verse between the protection of the children and the punishment of the enemies of God, leads to a more particular notice of the latter. It is clearly a description of the doings of the Lord when he shall come to judge among the nations, and to take unto himself the kingdom, see ii. 4, 10. Nations, as such, it is obvious, can be dealt with—prospered or punished—only in their national capacity. The past and existing nations of the earth have been or are being so dealt with ; and are those to be exempted which shall exist at the appearing and kingdom of the Lord ? Is it not quite in accordance with reason and experience, as well as Scripture, that their national judging should precede the general judgment of the dead ? The coming of Christ to the judgment both of nations and individuals is often described in parallel language to that of the text both in the Old and New Testaments : “ A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about,” Ps. xcvi. 3 ; “ The Lord shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire—taking vengeance on them that know not God,” 2 Thess. i. 7, 8 ; “ My sword shall be bathed in heaven : behold, it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment,” Is. xxxiv. 5. In the text perhaps fire may represent superhuman instrumentality, and the sword human agency, as in Ezek. xxxviii. 21, both being combined in the final judgments of the nations.

17. *They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst (or, one after another), eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the Lord.*

A picture of idolatry—one prominent form of vice against which the fury of the Lord will be directed in the last



days—is here drawn in language descriptive of ancient idolatry. The word “sanctify,” which bears a very wide meaning in Scripture, denotes here that imaginary purification which the heathen seek by their idolatrous rites. The clause “behind one<sup>1</sup> in the midst” has been variously understood. Lowth renders “after the rights of Achad,” referring to a Syrian god called Adad. It is generally supposed that the clause contains the idea of a procession of worshippers following the officiating priest at their head. There is nothing to favour the insertion of *tree* in the English version, which is otherwise literal. “In the midst” has been connected both with the preceding and the subsequent context, making the meaning in the midst of the gardens (or groves), or in the midst of those eating swine’s flesh. What particular “abomination,” if any, is meant, is unknown: the expression may be general, denoting anything prohibited. By the “mouse” is generally understood the field-mouse, which in Syria is of larger size than the common mouse, and still exists in such numbers as often to be most destructive.

18. *For I know their works and their thoughts: it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory.*

The first clause, as it is rendered in the common version, intimates, that however concealed the secret rites of idolaters in their groves might be, they were not hid from the Lord. The remainder of the verse can mean only what it says. If fault be found with a literal exposition of it, it is to the word of Scripture that objection is taken. The difficulty which such passages have caused critics has been their simplicity. Difficulties have been created where none exist. The prediction will be fulfilled when the proceedings of the Almighty in delivering Israel, and in dashing his enemies in pieces like a potter’s vessel, will arrest the attention of all flesh. Then all nations shall

<sup>1</sup> אַחַד אַחַד.

flow unto the mountain of the Lord. Then it is written, "I will set my glory among the heathen, and all the heathen shall see my judgment that I have executed," Ezek. xxxix. 21.

19, 20. *And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal, and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles. And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord, out of all nations, upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters (or, coaches), and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the Lord, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord.*

The gathering of all nations is in other places connected with the setting up a sign or standard, see v. 26: "All ye inhabitants of the world, see ye, when he lifteth up an ensign on the mountains," xviii. 3. "Those that escape of them," are those who survive the national judgments previously predicted, who are thus brought to submit to the sceptre of Christ. They are here represented as the missionaries of the world. Tarshish, a seaport, may represent maritime countries generally. Pul has been supposed to be Philæ, an island in the Nile; Lud to be Lydia in Africa. Tubal and Javan were sons of Japhet who settled in Europe. There are thus introduced representatives of seagirt or commercial countries, of Africa, and of Europe, representing, it may be supposed, the whole world. The Redeemer will "not fail nor be discouraged till he hath set judgment (righteousness) in the earth, and the isles shall wait for his law." Some of the blessings of Israel at last are then described. First their return—here their second return—is foretold, see xiv. 2: "Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far."

21, 22. *And I will also take of them for priests, and for Levites, saith the Lord. For as the new heavens, and the new earth, which I*

*will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain.*

A second blessing is the distinguished place which Israel will then occupy as the ministers of the Lord. This is the least that the language of verse 21 can be taken to express: "Ye shall be named the Priests of the Lord: men shall call you the Ministers of our God." The passage is one of the strongest in favour of the opinion held by some of a restored temple-service for purposes which are among the secret things that belong unto the Lord;—an opinion full of difficulty, but not extravagant, if the literality of fulfilled prophecy be carried out with what is unfulfilled. The sons of Aaron—the *cohens*—still remain as distinct and well marked a class among the Jews as ever. The permanency of Israel's happy condition is the next blessing promised (22). Whatever be the duration of what may be termed the dispensation of the kingdom, which will succeed the present dispensation of the gospel, during its peaceful ages, will the blessedness and distinction of Israel continue. In the previous chapter, 17-19, her prosperity and joy are also connected with the perpetuity of the new heavens and the new earth. She enjoyed a pre-eminence above all other nations in the days of her early history, until she forfeited both her spiritual and her temporal privileges; and why may not this pre-eminence be restored along with her other privileges, when the set time to favour Zion is come? With such distinctions—with such gradations of nobility—as exist among the inhabitants of the spiritual world, both among angels and saints, why should not this be the case also in the new earth?

23. *And it shall come to pass, that from one new-moon to another, and from one sabbath to another (or, from new-moon to his new-moon, and from sabbath to his sabbath), shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord.*

A general feature of those times will be the univer-

sality of Divine worship. A very similar prophecy occurs in Zech. xiv. 16. The expression "before me" is general, —it is not here limited to Jerusalem, unless the following verse be understood of the same class as verse 23. In that case those referred to are according to the parallel passage in Zech. : "Every one that is left of all the nations which come against Jerusalem." To appear before the Lord is a common scriptural definition of public worship. "From one new moon to another," is from month to month. Then "All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord ; and shall glorify thy name," Ps. lxxxvi. 9.

24. *And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me : for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched ; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.*

After the previous description of the blissfulness of his people, the prophecy closes by contrasting with it the fate of the enemies of the Lord, the issue of the terrible day described, verses 15, 16. Of that his people will be witnesses : "The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance," Ps. lviii. 9. Where the spectacle of unburied corpses is to be seen is clearly in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, see xxx. 33 ; and xxxiv. 5. Of the slain of the Lord then it is said, "Seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them that they may cleanse the land." In the clause "their worm shall not die," there may be allusion to the protracted period during which, under such circumstances, the worms, "the creatures of one's own bones," will hold their "horrid carnival ;" and in the clause "neither shall their fire be quenched," to the lengthened burning of fires in such circumstances to consume the dead. Or rather, understanding the expressions in the sense in which they are employed by our Lord, Mark ix. 44, the allusion is to the torments of the lost ; the general judgment accompanying or immediately



following the day of national judgment. The agonies of the unsaved can be known only to those who shall experience them ; but even were there no elements of physical suffering in their unblessed condition, there will be enough in their eternal self-reproach and self-contempt to constitute the gnawings of the worm that will not die, and the burnings of the fire that will not quench.

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One of the many interesting questions connected with the literal exposition of Isaiah and the other prophets, is its bearing upon the subject of missionary exertion. At first sight the view given, in the preceding pages, of the manner of the world's conversion, may seem hostile to evangelistic enterprise, whether among Jews or Gentiles. If darkness is to cover the earth, and gross darkness the people, until the Lord rise upon Israel, and his glory be seen upon her,—if Gentiles are to be converted by being brought to Israel's light,—if the law is finally to go forth from Mount Zion, then it may be asked, Why seek the conversion of the heathen now ? Ought not missionary efforts to be centered on the seed of Jacob ? Ought not the single aim of the Christian to be to give the Lord no rest “ till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth ? ” But if, again, it is by the dealings of the Almighty in “ the day of Jacob's trouble,” that Israel is at last to be turned to the Lord,—if it is by the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning that the filth of the daughters of Zion is to be finally and for ever washed away,—if it is by two parts being cut off and dying that the remaining third part will be refined as silver is refined, then why seek the conversion of Israel ? If, in short, as appears taught in that word which is given not to explain the doings of the Lord, but to declare them, the Gentiles are to be recovered to the faith and

obedience of the gospel by converted Israel, and Israel on her part is to be recovered by the judgments of the last days, where is the use of seeking now the salvation of Jew or Greek? When compared, however, with other Scripture, there is nothing in these prophetic facts to encourage the folding of the hands, and the awaiting, with Mahometan apathy, the operations of Providence; on the contrary, there is everything to stimulate missionary zeal. For not only of Jews, but also of Gentiles, is it true, that "there is a remnant according to the election of grace," Romans xiv. 5; and it is the recovery of that remnant which has to be sought by fervent prayer, by Christian liberality, and by active exertion. It is written, that "*blindness in part* has happened to Israel until *the fulness of the Gentiles* be come in," Romans xi. 25. Their blindness is only partial, not universal; and the work of the Christian Church is to gather out the elect who are not blinded—the "remnant" of the previous quotation. The expression "the fulness of the Gentiles," implies the same truth in regard to them. It does not mean the whole Gentile world: with this meaning the passage would teach that the blindness of Israel will not be removed until the Gentiles are converted to the Messiah, which would contradict the oft repeated assurance that the Jews are to be the instruments of their recovery. What the expression means is taught when it is said, "God at the first did visit the Gentiles *to take out of them a people* for his name," Acts xv. 14. Not to renew the whole Gentile world, but to take out of them a people to himself, is the purpose of God and the aim of the Christian. When this people shall have been taken out, or when, in other words, the fulness of the Gentiles shall be come in, the blindness of Israel will be terminated—all Israel shall be saved; the set time to favour Zion will be come; she will be purified by the fires of judgment. The salvation of those of Israel who are not blinded, together

with the taking out of a people from among the Gentiles, thus form the work of those who are enjoined to say to others, Come,—who have to preach the gospel *for a witness* to all nations ; and when this is done national judgment will accomplish the remaining purposes of the Almighty. More than this has never yet been effected by evangelistic labour : in no case has it been rewarded with the conversion of a whole nation ; in every case has it gathered out a remnant. The object of Christian missions is to carry the candlestick of the gospel into every land, until the last of the elect under the present dispensation shall have been attracted to its light. Wherever it has already served that purpose, it has been removed out of its place.





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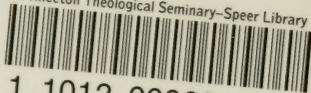




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